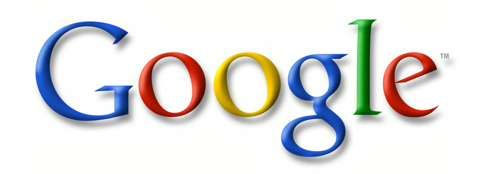




Laclos (C. de) Dangerous Connection[s]
a Sotheby's 12/12/[2]2 £3-3-0 half russia, m. e. Lon[don]

Sotheby's 9 May 1922 Sold £1-12-0

399 Hardy (Thomas) Jude th[e Obscure] cloth, 1896—Ch[oderlos de Laclos, Les Liaisons Dan]gereuses, 2 ... only ...

386 [Surtees (R. S.)] Mr. ... parts I–III, V–X ... part X; togethe[r] ... upper cover to ... part X, colou[red] ... slightly f...

554 **LACLOS** (Choder[los de]) [Les Liaisons] Dangereuses, or Le[tters collected in a] Private Society and [published for the] Instruction of others, tr[anslated] by Ernest Dowson, *with illustrations in photogravure after Mannet, Fragonard fils, and Gerard, beautifully coloured by hand* (only 360 copies issued), 2 vols, 8vo, *cloth*, RARE, £7 10s 189[8]

241 **Louvet: Revolutionis[t] Writer,** by J. RIVERS, *u[...] including a photogravur[e]* cloth, gilt top, new (pub
(Postage extra—Inland 1s,

3 [CHODERLOS DE LACLOS
1 for £10-10-2 vol. *plates after M*
21/11/23 *rubbed, g. e.*

2 LAUZAN (C. de) Les ...
une Société, et publiées pour ...
in 2, 12mo, calf, *binding worn*

.53 **Dangerous Acquaintances** [LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES], by CHODERL[OS DE LACLOS], translated by RICHARD ALI[NGTON], an Introduction, demy 8v[o], white back, Broadway tran[slations]

...cloth, partly unopened. £7 ...
*Priva[tely] ...ea: Lond...*
*** Vol. I. 8 plates, xx. + 298 pp. Vol. II. 7 ... + [1] + 2...
... Edition limited to 360 copie[s] ... "... npt to pourtra[y] ...
r for a warning to the unw[ary] ... he 'Liaisons
the most complete manual o[f] ...uction: so that d...
... Charles X. this masterpiece was suppressed as throwing too l...
manners of the old régime." "*Les Liaisons Dangereuses* is now
...lyand completely translated into English by Mr. Ernest Dowson.

38 **Dangerous Acquaintances,** by Chode de Laclos, coloured frontispiece and nu rous full-page drawings by Alastair, ' captures the intensity of rapture and ecstasy of love which are characteristi the frenzy of youth, roy. 8vo, cloth, as (pub. at 12/6), 1933

In his attempt to portray the wiles of the sed for a warning to the unwary, the authot produce most complete manual of the art of seduc During the austere reign of Charles X., this ma piece was suppressed as throwing too lurid a re tion on the manners of the old *regime.*

370 Prior (M.) Poems, 2 vol., *portrait,* 1733 ; Dangerous Connections or Letters Collected in a Society, 4 vol., 1784—Milton (J.) Poetical Works, 3 vol., 1773—Crabbe (G.) Works, 4 vol., *portrait, contemporary calf and half calf* (13)

Soth 27/11 1934 Sold 30/-

lash of 4 ells
otic books

21
53

4 vols in 2

a a e

[illegible]

# DANGEROUS
# CONNECTIONS:

A SERIES OF

## LETTERS,

SELECTED FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE

OF

## A PRIVATE CIRCLE;

AND PUBLISHED FOR THE INSTRUCTION
OF SOCIETY.

BY M. C**** DE L***.

---

"I have observed the Manners of the Times, and have wrote those Letters."

J. J. ROUSSEAU, Pref. to the New Eloise.

---

SECOND EDITION.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

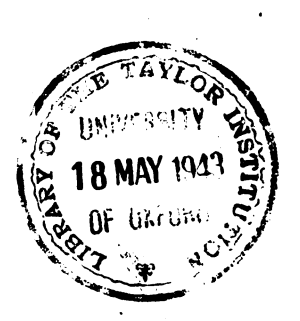
VOL. I.

---

London:

PRINTED FOR J. EBERS, OLD BOND STREET.

1812.




HARDING AND WRIGHT,
PRINTERS,
St. John's Square, London.

# ADVERTISEMENT

FROM THE

# EDITOR.

WE think it incumbent on us to acquaint the Public, notwithstanding the title of this work, and what the Compiler asserts in his preface, that we do not pledge ourselves for the authenticity of this Collection, and that we have even very forcible reasons to believe it a fiction.

Nay, that the author, who seems studiously to have sought nature, has himself awkwardly defeated his intention, by the epocha in which he has placed his events. The morals of several of his personages are so corrupt, that it is impossible they should have existed in this age; an age of philosophy, and in which an extensive diffusion of knowledge has had the happy effect to render the men famed for morality

and integrity, and the female sex for reserve and modesty.

We are therefore inclined to think, if the adventures related in this work have any foundation in truth, they must have happened at some other time and place: and we blame the author much, who, probably seduced by the hope of interesting us the more, has dared to modernize and to decorate, with our usages and customs, morals to which we are utter strangers.

To preserve, at least, the too credulous reader, as much as in our power, from all surprise on this subject, we will strengthen our opinion with an unanswerable argument; for though similar causes never fail to produce the same effects, yet we cannot now find a young lady, with an estate of 60,000 livres a year, take the veil, nor a Presidente, in the bloom of youth and beauty, die of grief.

# PREFACE.

THIS Work, or rather Collection, which the Public will, perhaps, still find too voluminous, contains but a small part of the correspondence from which it is extracted. Being appointed to arrange it by the persons in whose possession it was, and who, I knew, intended it for publication, I asked, for my sole recompence, the liberty to reject every thing that appeared to me useless: and I have endeavoured to preserve only the letters which appeared necessary to illustrate the events, or to unfold the characters. If to this inconsiderable share in the work be added an arrangement of those letters which I have preserved, with a strict attention to dates, and some short annotations, calculated, for the most part, to

point out some citations, or to explain some retrenchments I have made, the Public will see the extent of my labours, and the part I have taken in this publication.

I have also changed, or suppressed, the names of the personages, and if, among those I have substituted, any resemblance may be found which might give offence, I beg it may be looked on as an unintentional error.

I proposed farther alterations, as to purity of style and diction, in both which many faults will be found. I could also have wished to have been authorised to shorten some long letters, several of which treat separately, and almost without transition, of objects totally foreign to one another. This liberty, in which I was not indulged, would not have been sufficient to give merit to the work, but would have corrected part of its defects.

It was objected to me, that the intention was to publish the letters themselves, and not a work compiled from the letters; that it would be as distant from probability as truth, that eight or ten persons, who were concerned in this correspondence, should have wrote with equal purity of style:—And on my representing that there was not one which did not abound with essential faults, and was not very open to criticism, I was answered, that every reasonable reader would undoubtedly expect to find faults in a collection of letters of private persons, since among all those hitherto published by authors of the highest reputation, and even some academicians, there are none totally exempt from censure. Those reasons have not convinced me; and I am still of opinion they are easier to give than likely to obtain assent; but I had not my option, and submitted, reserving

only the liberty of entering my protest, and declaring my dissent, as I now do.

As to the merit of this work, perhaps it does not become me to touch upon it; my opinion neither can, or ought, to influence any one. However, as some wish to know something of a book before they take it in hand, those who are so disposed will proceed with this preface—the rest will do better to pass on to the work itself.

Though inclined to publish those letters, I am yet far from thinking they will meet success; and let not this sincere declaration be construed into the affected modesty of an author: for I declare, with the same frankness, that if I had thought this collection an unworthy offering to the Public, it should not have taken up any part of my time.—Let us try to reconcile this apparent contradiction.

The merit of a work consists in its utility, or its agreeableness, and even in both, when it admits of both. But success, which is not always the criterion of merit, often arises more from a choice of subject than the execution, more from the aggregate of the objects presented than the manner of treating them: such a collection as the title announces this to be, being the letters of a whole circle, and containing a diversity of interests, is not likely to fix the attention of the reader. Besides, the sentiments they contain being feigned or dissembled, can only excite an interest of curiosity, always infinitely inferior to that of sentiment, and less disposed to indulgence, as well as more apt to be struck with defects in the narrative, as they are constantly in opposition to the only desire curiosity seeks to gratify. These defects are, perhaps, partly compen-

great good understanding. "I think," said she to me, after having read the manuscript of this correspondence, "I should render my daughter an "essential service in putting this book "in her hands on her wedding-day." Should all mothers think thus, I shall congratulate myself on having published it.

Yet I shall leave this flattering supposition at a distance; and I still think this collection will please but few.—Men and women of depraved minds will take an interest in discountenancing a work that may injure them; and as they are never wanting in ingenuity, they may bring over the whole class of rigorists, who will be alarmed at the picture we have dared to present of profligacy.

The pretenders to free thinking will take no concern in the fate of a devout woman, whom, for that reason, they

will not fail to pronounce weak, whilst the devotee will be displeased to see virtue sink under misfortune, and will complain that religion does not sufficiently display its power. On the other hand, persons of a delicate taste will be disgusted with the simplicity and defective style of many of the letters, whilst the generality of readers, led away with the idea that every thing that appears in print is a work of labour, will think he sees in some of the other letters the laboured style of an author sufficiently apparent, notwithstanding the disguise he has assumed.

To conclude; it will be pretty generally said, that a thing is little worth out of its place; and that if the too correct style of authors takes off from the gracefulness of miscellaneous letters, negligences in these become real

faults, and make them insupportable when consigned to the press.

I sincerely own that those reproaches may have some foundation. I believe also, I might possibly be able to answer them, even without exceeding the length of a preface: but it is clear, that were I to attempt to answer every thing, I could do nothing else; and that if I had deemed it requisite to do so, I should at once have suppressed both preface and book.

# EXTRACT

FROM THE

# CORRESPONDENCE

ON WHAT CONCERNS THE

# HAPPINESS OF MAN AND SOCIETY.

[No. III.]

## THE UTILITY OF NOVELS.

THE NOVEL OF

# DANGEROUS CONNECTIONS.

ARE Novels useful, or are they prejudicial to the morals? is a question long agitated, and not yet resolved; for the reasons on both sides are equally plausible. Undoubtedly Richardson, who

is read and cited every where, though prolix and diffuse, has not a little contributed to the practice of pure morality; and yet, on the other hand, what mischiefs have been produced by the immense multitude of novels of all sorts with which France and all Europe have been overrun for some years past; and, as if the evil done by these temporary plagues was not sufficiently accomplished during their short existence, it is prolonged by reviving them in eternal collections. A novel, the mo rality of which is equivocal, is a very dangerous poison; a novel that only possesses mediocrity, is at best useless. Even a good novel is but aliment for a child, or some weak being, to whom morality unadorned is a disgusting object. Hence we may conclude, that every thinking man will take care to banish this kind of works from his library.

He will then likewise proscribe that novel, now so much prized, called *Dangerous Connections, or Letters collected in a Society, and published for the Instruction of other Societies.*

After having read a few pages of this work, one is almost led to think this title a piece of pleasantry; the letters of Madame de Merteuil, and of the Viscount de Valmont, *published* truly *for the instruction of society.* Is it in order to form people to the detestable art of seduction, or to inspire them with a horror of it? and yet this work has been censured, and approved; has had all the honours of war, while so many other useful works are like the manes of the ancients, to whom a sepulchre was denied, and who were forced to wander upon the gloomy banks of the Styx, and admitted only by stealth. *O cæcas hominum mentes!*

I am far from a wish to calumniate

the author, who, I am assured, is a military man of the highest character for wit and good conduct; but his work, which seems to have a moral end in view, is in reality very dangerous. It has been said to be a picture of the manners of a certain class in society; and, if it was not a resemblance, where would be its utility? Must monsters be created to cause in us an aversion of ordinary vices? If it is true, it ought to have been concealed; there are shocking nudities which our minds revolt at rather than receive any instruction from. The veil that covers the Tiberiuses and the Messalinas, ought not to be wholly lifted up.

Young men will find in this novel easy means of seduction; young women will here see portraits of embellished vice; and old libertines will be amused by the exploits of Valmont. But what a monster is Valmont, if such a charac-

ter exists; and those who know that class of society, assure us, they have met with many such. If there really are such beings, ought not their society to be avoided carefully? It is a forest filled with robbers: to enter it we should be well armed. It is a road full of great precipices, to avoid falling into which, we must be very circumspect.

What a character is the Marchioness de Merteuil! Sometimes she is a Medea, sometimes a Messalina. Read the tenth letter: vice is to be drawn; but should it be drawn in such seducing colours? Are there many young people who will prefer the character of a virtuous man to the brilliant and lively one of the profligate Valmont? Are there many who will not blush at the awkwardness of Cecilia? And when one blushes at being ridiculed, they are not very far from the vice that exempts

them from it. In France, ridicule is too much dreaded; they would rather be vicious; and this book will rather assist that taste.

The style of romances may serve to lead us to the knowledge of the morals of ages and nations. Thus the country, which has lately produced the natural and moving *Henrietta of Gerstenfeld*, is far from the state of depravity of Paris and London. I form my opinion from the book. In the last age the French novels were full of gallantry and virtuous love, because then they were gallant and respectful. In this age, they have substituted wit to love, and the novels are stuffed with an unintelligible jargon of metaphysics. Of this they grew tired, and libertinism succeeded to it. From thence so many licentious romances. The immense quantity that are produced is a complete proof of the corruption of the

age; the rapidity with which they are bought, the rage with which they are devoured, farther prove this depravation.

Doing justice to the zeal that seems to animate the author of those observations, we may be permitted, I hope, to make some farther remarks on the manner he has presented his? Before we begin to examine the degree of moral utility contained in the novel of *Dangerous Connections*, the author of the correspondence first begs leave to ask whether novels in general are useful or prejudicial to morals? This method is the most prudent; but is it not singular, that, acknowledging the indecision of this question, because the reasons for and against are equally seducing, he is still so bold to condemn, indiscriminately, all novels, without assigning any new reasons in justification of this definitive sentence? On the

contrary, the author asserts, Richardson's novels have been useful to morality, to preserve them in their purity and in the same breath advises all thinking men to banish them from their libraries! Are the consequences suitable to the premises? Is not that confounding the genus with the species? But if it was even true, that the best novel is only food for infancy, or a weak being, for whom unadorned morality is a terrifying object, would the author's decision be the more justifiable? I will not determine; but I would ask what he means by those *thinking* men, for whom unadorned morality is not terrifying? It would be, perhaps, those declaiming misanthropes, who censure and despise every thing that does not bear a resemblance to their savage and austere way of thinking? I have sometimes had a good opinion of their understanding,

hast been ever diffident of their hearts; were we to attend to them, we should also banish from our libraries the divine poem of Telemachus, which is the first of novels, which modest qualification does not hinder it from being, if one may venture to call it, the first of our books; not only by the grandeur of the business it treats, but also by the manner in which it is treated. We should also banish from our libraries even the works of the *Correspondence*; the morality of which is become very interesting, by an ornamented, pure, and elegant style; if, notwithstanding those qualities, this work has its opposers, would it find many readers if it was divested of them? God forbid I should ever intend making a general apology for all novels! that would be the idea of a Demoniac; I only mean to justify useful novels. If any one makes a bad use of this kind of writ-

ing, I most willingly acquiesce in their condemnation. Let us now examine whether the author of *Dangerous Connections* deserves to suffer.

What is a novel? A correct picture of morals put in motion.—What should be the aim of a novel? To blend instruction with amusement.—When the morals of the actors are corrupt, is it allowable, with deference to decency, to draw them in their proper shades and colours? Undoubtedly it is; but with the greatest caution, lest by giving vice, whose contagion must be dreaded, its true, though seducing and agreeable aspect, without resisting, diminishing, or rendering useless, the effect it may produce by the contrast of gentleness, peace, and happiness, which virtue secures. The author of the *Errors of the Heart and Mind*, and the other of the *Confessions of the Count of* ——, have gone wide of this mark;

yet their characters are drawn after nature; the Meilcourts are still the ornament of the Bon Ton societies. But should irregularities be drawn without inflicting their punishment? Should vice, with impunity, applaud its infamous triumphs? Should innocence weep without being avenged? Certainly not. Those novels deserve the severest censure of the author of the Correspondence; those are the books which should be carefully concealed from the busy curiosity of young people. Let any one take the trouble to compare the works I have now quoted, and similar ones, with the novel of *Dangerous Connections*, shall we not always feel a certain aversion, a kind of antipathy for Valmont and the Marchioness de Merteuil, notwithstanding the brilliant cast he has given two performers. Let some attention be paid to the skill with which he has

contrasted them in the gentle, sensible, and generous Madame de Rosemonde; how moving, how unaffected her virtue. The following letter, wrote to the victim of the profligate Valmont, is, in my opinion, alone sufficient to counterbalance, at least, the impression this same Valmont, and the infamous accomplice in his crimes, could make.

## LETTER CXXX.

*Madame de* ROSEMONDE, *to the Presidente de* TOURVEL.

" WHY, my lovely dear, will you
" no longer be my daughter? Why
" do you seem to announce that our
" correspondence is to cease?* Is it
" to punish me for not guessing at

* See Letter cxxviii.

"what was improbable; or do you "suspect me of creating you affliction "designedly? I know your heart too "well, to imagine you would enter- "tain such an opinion of mine.—The "distress your letter plunges me in is "much less on my own account than "yours. Oh! my young friend, with "grief I tell you, you are too worthy "of being beloved ever to be happy "in love. Where is there a truly "delicate and sensible woman, who "has not met unhappiness where she "expected bliss? Do men know how "to rate the women they possess?

"Not but many of them are vir- "tuous in their addresses, and con- "stant in their affections—but even "among those, how few that know "how to put themselves in unison with "our hearts. I do not imagine, my "dear child, their affection is like "ours. They experience the same

"transport often with more violence, "but they are strangers to that uneasy "officiousness, that delicate solici- "tude, that produces in us those con- "tinual tender cares, whose sole aim "is the beloved object. Man enjoys "the happiness he feels, woman that "she gives.

"This difference, so essential, and so "seldom observed, influences, in a very "sensible manner, the totality of their "respective conduct. The pleasure of "the one is to gratify desires; but "that of the other is to create them. "To know to please is in man the "means of success; and in woman it "is success itself.

"And do not imagine the excep- "tions, be they more or less numerous, "that may be quoted, can be success- "fully opposed to those general truths, "which the voice of the public has "guarantied, with the only distinction

" as to men of infidelity from incon-
" stancy; a distinction of which they
" avail themselves, and of which they
" should be ashamed; which never
" has been adopted by any of our sex
" but those of abandoned characters,
" who are a scandal to us, and to
" whom all methods are acceptable
" which they think may deliver them
" from the painful sensation of their
" own meanness.

" I thought, my lovely dear, those
" reflections might be of use to you,
" in order to oppose the chimerical
" ideas of perfect happiness, with
" which love never fails to amuse our
" imagination. Deceitful hope! to
" which we are still attached, even
" when we find ourselves under the
" necessity of abandoning it—whose
" loss multiplies and irritates our
" already too real sorrows, inseparable
" from an ardent passion. This task

"of alleviating your troubles, or di-
"minishing their number, is the only
"one I will or can now fulfil. In
"disorders which are without remedy,
"no other advice can be given, than
"as to the regimen to be observed.
"The only thing I wish you to re-
"member is, that to pity is not to
"blame a patient. Alas! who are
"we, that we dare blame one another?
"Let us leave the right of judging
"to the Searcher of hearts; and I
"will even venture to believe, that
"in his paternal sight, a crowd of
"virtues may compensate a single
"weakness.

"But I conjure you, above all
"things, my dear friend, to guard
"against violent resolutions, which are
"less the effects of fortitude than
"despondency: do not forget, that
"although you have made another
"possessor of your existence (to use

" your own expression) you had it not
" in your power to deprive your friends
" of the share they were before pos-
" sessed of, and which they will always
" claim.

" Adieu, my dear child! Think
" sometimes on your tender mother;
" and be assured you always will be,
" above every thing, the dearest object
" of her thoughts.

" *Castle of* ——."

If the openness of the little Volanges, or her ignorance, should seem ridiculous to those of her own age, the unhappy consequences that resulted from it, will be an useful lesson to mothers to be cautious in what hands they intrust the education of their children. But can a young girl, who has once imbibed this bad education,

avoid the consequences I mention, without any other guide but her timidity and absolute ignorance of vice? Is it in a corrupt world, in which she is just entering, that she will receive the fatal knowledge? Does not the author of the Correspondence himself say, "To "enter it, we should be well armed; "it is a road full of precipices: to "avoid falling into which, we must be "very circumspect." This is all well —But if, unfortunately, I am blind, or without a guide, who is to restore me sight, or lead me? I conclude, then, that a young person, who would be pleased, at first, with the brilliant character of the Marchioness de Merteuil, would soon change her opinion, and not be tempted to imitate her, when she would see the dreadful and examplary punishment inflicted on this guilty woman. She will shudder at the thought of the miseries to which

one single fault condemned Cecilia Volanges. Valmont perishing in the bloom of life, by a violent death, loaded with the contempt and disgrace of all men of worth, disowned even by the wicked, will deter all those, whose vanity and a desire to shine might induce them to copy such a character, from attempting to imitate him.

(By the ABBE KENTZINGER.)

# DANGEROUS CONNECTIONS.

## LETTER I.

CECILIA VOLANGES *to* SOPHIA CARNAY, *at the Convent of the Ursulines of* ——.

YOU see, my dear friend, I keep my word, and that dress does not totally take up all my time; I shall ever have some left for you. In this single day I have seen more finery of attire, than in the four years we have spent together;

and I believe the haughty Tanville* will be more mortified at my first visit, when I shall certainly desire to see her, than she used to be every time she came to see us *in fiochi*. Mamma advises with me in every thing; she behaves to me no longer as a boarder in a convent. I have a chamber-maid to myself; a chamber and a closet of my own, and a very pretty scrutoire, of which I keep the key, and where I can lock up every thing. My Mamma has told me, I must be with her every morning at her levee; that it would be sufficient to have my head drest by dinner, because we should always be alone, and that then she would each day tell me what time I should come to her apartment in the evening. The remainder of my time is at my own disposal; I have my harpsichord, my drawings, and books,

* A boarder in the same convent.

just as in the convent, only that the mother abbess is not here to scold. And I may always be idle, if I please: but as I have not my dear Sophy to chat and laugh with, I am as well pleased with some occupation. It is not yet five, and I am not to go to Mamma till seven: what a deal of time, if I had any thing to tell you! but nothing has been yet mentioned to me of any consequence: and if it were not for the preparations I see making, and the number of women employed for me, I should be apt to think they have no notion of my nuptials, and that it was one of old Josephine's* tales. Yet Mamma having so often told me, that a young lady should remain in a convent, until she was on the point of marriage, and having now brought

* Josephine was the portress of the convent.

me home, I am apt to think Josephine right.

A coach has just stopt at our door, and Mamma has sent for me. If it should be my intended!—I am not dressed, and am all in agitation; my heart flutters. I asked my maid, if she knew who was with my Mamma? "Why," says she, laughing, "it is Mr. C—." I really believe it is he. I will certainly return and write you the whole; however, that's his name. I must not make them wait. Adieu, for a moment!

How you will laugh at your poor Cecilia, my dear Sophy! I'm quite ashamed! But you would have been deceived as well as I. On entering Mamma's room, I saw a gentleman in black, standing close by her, I saluted him as well as I could, and remained motionless. You may guess, I examined him from head to foot. "Madam,"

said he to Mamma, "this is a most "charming young lady, and I am ex-"tremely sensible of your goodness." So positive a declaration made me tremble all over; and not being able to support me, I threw myself in an armed chair, quite red and disconcerted. In an instant he was at my knees, and then you may judge how poor Cecilia's head was bewildered; I instantly started up and shrieked, just as on the day of the great thunder. Mamma burst out laughing, saying, "Well, what's the mat-"ter? Sit down, and give Mr. —— "your foot." Thus, my dear friend, Mr. —— turns out to be my shoemaker. You can't conceive how much I was ashamed; happily, there was no one but Mamma present. I am, however, resolved when I am married he shall not be my shoemaker. Well! am I not now much the wiser? Farewell! it is almost six, and my maid

says it is time to dress. Adieu ! my dear Sophy; I love you as much as I did at the convent.

P. S. I don't know whom to send with this, and shall wait till Josephine calls.

*Paris, Aug. 3, 17—.*

---

## LETTER II.

*The* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL *to the* VISCOUNT VALMONT, *at the Castle of* ———.

RETURN, my dear Viscount, return ! How can you think of idling your days with an old aunt, whose fortune is already settled on you ! Set out the moment you receive this letter, for I want you much. A most enchanting

idea has just struck me, and I wish to confide the execution of it to you.

This hint should be sufficient, and you should think yourself so highly honoured by my choice, as to fly to receive my orders on your knees: but my favours are thrown away on one who no longer sets a value on them; and you presume upon my kindness, where the alternative must be eternal hatred, or excessive indulgence. I will acquaint you with my scheme; but you, like a true knight errant, must first swear to undertake no other adventure until this is achieved. It is worthy a hero. You will at once satiate love and revenge. It will be an additional exploit to your memoirs; yes, your memoirs, for I will have them published, and I will undertake the task. But to return to what more immediately concerns us. Madame de Volanges intends to marry her daughter:

it is yet a secret; but she yesterday informed me of it. And whom do you think she has chosen for her son-in-law? Count Gercourt. Who could have thought I should have been allied to Gercourt? I am provoked beyond expression at your stupidity! Well, don't you guess yet? Oh, thou essence of dulness! What, have you then pardoned him the affair of Madame the Intendante? And I, monster!* have I not more reason for revenge? But I shall resume my temper;

* To understand this passage, it must be remarked, that the Count de Gercourt had quitted the Marchioness de Merteuil for the Intendante de ***, who had on his account abandoned the Viscount de Valmont, and that then the attachment of the Marchioness to the Viscount commenced. As that adventure was long antecedent to the events which are the subject of these letters, it has been thought better to suppress the whole of that correspondence.

the prospect of retaliation, recals my serenity.

You and I have been often tormented with the important idea framed by Gercourt, of the lady he intended to honour with his hand, and his ridiculous presumption of being exempt from the unavoidable fate of married men. You know his foolish prepossessions in favour of conventual education, and his still more weak prejudices for women of a fair complexion: and I really believe, notwithstanding Volanges' sixty thousand livres a year, he never would have thought of this girl, had she not been black eyed, or not educated in a convent.

Let us convince him, he is a most egregious fool, as one day or other he must be: but that's not the business; the jest will be, should he act upon so absurd an opinion. How we should be diverted the next day with his

boasts! for boast he will: and if once you properly form this little girl, it will be astonishing if Gercourt does not become, like so many others, the standing ridicule of Paris. The heroine of this new romance merits all your attention; she is really handsome, just turn'd of fifteen, and a perfect rose-bud; awkward as you could wish, and totally unpolished: but you men don't mind such trifles; a certain languishing air, which promises a great deal, added to my recommendation of her, leaves only to you to thank me and obey. You will receive this letter to-morrow morning: I require to see you at seven in the evening. I shall not be visible to any one else till eight, not even to my chevalier, who happens to be my reigning favourite for the present; he has not a head for such great affairs. You see I am not blinded by love. I shall set you at liberty at eight, and you'll return to

sup with the charming girl at ten, for the mother and daughter sup with me. Farewell! it is past noon. Now for other objects.

*Paris, Aug.* 4, 17—.

---

## LETTER III.

CECILIA VOLANGES *to* SOPHIA CARNAY.

I HAVE yet no news for my dear friend. Mamma had a great deal of company at supper last night. Notwithstanding the strong inclination I had to make my observations, especially among the men, I was far from being entertained. The whole company could not keep their eyes from me; they whispered; I could observe plainly they were speak-

ing of me, and that made me blush; I could not help it: I wish I could; for I observed when any one looked at the other ladies they did not blush, or the rouge they put on prevented their blushes from being seen. It must be very difficult not to change countenance when a man fixes his eyes on you.

What gave me the most uneasiness was, not to know what they thought of me; however, I think I heard the word pretty two or three times: but I'm sure I very distinctly heard that of awkward; and that must be very true, for she that said so is a relation, and an intimate friend of Mamma's. She seems even to have taken a sudden liking to me. She was the only person who took a little notice of me the whole evening. I also heard a man after supper, who I am sure was speaking of me, say to another, "We must let

" it ripen, we shall see this winter." Perhaps he is to be my husband; but if so, I have still to wait four months! I wish I knew how it is to be.

Here's Josephine, and she says she is in haste. I must, however, tell you one of my awkward tricks—Oh, I believe that lady was right.

After supper, they all sat down to cards. I sat next Mamma. I don't know how it happened, but I fell asleep immediately. A loud laugh awoke me. I don't know whether I was the object of it; but I believe I was. Mamma gave me leave to retire, which pleas'd me much. Only think, it was then past eleven! Adieu, my dear Sophy! continue to love thy Cecilia. I assure you the world is not so pleasing as we used to think it.

*Paris, Aug.* 4, 17—.

## LETTER IV.

*The* Viscount de Valmont *to the* Marchioness de Merteuil.

Your orders are enchanting, and your manner of giving them still more delightful; you would even make one in love with despotism. It is not the first time, you know, that I regret I am no longer your slave; and yet, monster as you style me, I recal with rapture the time when you honoured me with softer names. I have often even wish'd again to deserve them, and to terminate, by giving along with you an example of constancy to the world. But matters of greater moment call us forth; conquest is our destiny, and we must follow it: we may, perhaps, meet again

at the end of our career; for permit me to say, without putting you out of temper, my beautiful Marchioness! you follow me with a pretty equal pace; and since, for the happiness of the world, we have separated to preach the faith, I am inclined to think, that in this mission of love, you have made more proselytes than I. I am well convinced of your zeal and fervour; and if the God of Love judged us according to our works, you would be the patron saint of some great city, whilst your friend would be at most a common village saint. This language no doubt will surprise you; but you must know, that for these eight days I hear and speak no other; and to make myself perfect in it, I am obliged to disobey you.

Don't be angry, and hear me. As you are the depository of all the secrets of my heart, I will intrust you with

the greatest project I ever formed. What do you propose to me? To seduce a young girl, who has seen nothing, knows nothing, and would in a manner give herself up without making the least defence, intoxicated with the first homage paid to her charms, and perhaps incited rather by curiosity than love; there twenty others may be as successful as I. Not so with the enterprise that engrosses my mind; its success insures me as much glory as pleasure; and even almighty Love, who prepares my crown, hesitates between the myrtle and laurel, or will rather unite them to honour my triumph. Even you yourself, my charming friend, will be struck with a holy respect, and in a fit of enthusiasm, will exclaim, This is the man after my own heart!

You know the Presidente Tourvel, her devout life, her conjugal love,

and the austerity of her principles; that is the object I attack; that is the enemy worthy of me; that is the point I intend to carry. I must tell you, the President is in Burgundy, prosecuting a considerable suit, (I hope to make him lose one of greater importance,) his inconsolable partner is to remain here the whole time of this afflicting widowhood. A mass each day, a few visits to the neighbouring poor, prayers morning and evening, a few solitary walks, pious conferences with my old aunt, and sometimes a melancholy game at whist, are her only amusements: but I am preparing some of a more efficacious nature for her. My guardian angel led me here for our mutual happiness. Fool that I was! I used to regret the time that I sacrificed to the customary ceremonies. How should I now be punished, by being obliged to return to Paris!

Fortunately there must be four to make a whist party; and as there is no one here but the curate of the place, my eternal aunt has pressed me much to sacrifice a few days to her; you may judge, I did not refuse her. You can't conceive how much she caresses me ever since; and above all, how much she is edified by seeing me so regular at mass and at prayers. But little does she imagine the divinity I adore there.

Thus, in the space of four days, have I given myself up to a violent passion. You are no stranger to the impetuosity of my desires, and how readily all obstacles fly before me: but I'll tell you what you don't know, that solitude adds immensely to the ardour of desire. I have but one idea; I cherish it by day, and dream on't by night. I must possess this woman, lest I should be so ridiculous

as to be in love; for whither may we not be led by frustrated desire? Oh, delicious enjoyment! I implore thee for my happiness, and, above all, for my repose. How happy it is for us, that the women make so weak a defence! Were it otherwise, we should be but their cowardly slaves. I feel myself at this moment penetrated with gratitude towards complaisant ladies, which naturally leads me to you, at whose feet I prostrate myself to obtain my pardon, and finish this already too long letter. Adieu, my charming friend!

*Castle of ——, Aug. 3, 17—.*

## LETTER V.

*The* Marchioness de Merteuil, *to the* Viscount Valmont.

Do you know, Viscount, your letter is wonderfully insolent, and has almost made me angry? But it plainly proves that you have lost your reason; and that consideration alone suppresses my indignation. Like a tender and generous friend, I forget my own injury, and am wholly taken up with your danger; and irksome as it is to enter into argument, I yield to the necessity of it at this time.

You possess the Presidente Tourvel! What a ridiculous extravagance! I here plainly perceive your downright folly, whose nature is to desire that

you cannot obtain. But let's examine this woman. She has regular features, it's true, but a total want of expression; a tolerable shape, but without the least elegance; dresses most horridly, with a bundle of ruffs about her neck, and her stays up to her chin. I tell you as a friend, two such women would be quite sufficient to ruin your reputation. Do you remember the day she collected for the poor at St. Roch, when you thank'd me so much for the view of so curious an exhibition. I think I see her still giving her hand to that great looby with the long hair, ready to fall at each step with her calash of four ells over every one's head, and blushing at every courtesy. Who then would have dared to tell you, you will sigh for this woman? For shame, Viscount! Blush yourself, and return to reason. I'll promise to keep this matter secret.

Let us now examine the disagreeable consequences that await you. What rival have you to encounter? A husband. Don't you feel yourself humiliated at that name? What a shame if you fail! and if you succeed, where is the glory?—I go farther: pleasure is out of the question; for who ever had any with a prude? I mean with a sincere one: reserv'd in the very bosom of pleasure, they give you but half enjoyments. The entirely devoting one's self, that delirium of voluptuousness, where pleasure is refined by excess—all those gifts of love are strangers to them. I'll prognosticate for you: suppose your summit of happiness, you'll find your Presidente will think she has done enough in treating you as a husband; and, be assured, that in the most tender conjugal tête à tête, the numerical distinction *two* is always apparent. But in this case it is much

worse; your prude is a devotee, and of that sort you are in a perpetual state of childhood; perhaps you may get over this obstacle: but don't flatter yourself that you'll annihilate it. Should you conquer the love of God, you'll not be able to dispel the fear of the devil; and though in holding your charmer in your arms, you may feel her heart palpitate, it will be from fear, not love. You might, perhaps, had you known this woman sooner, have made something of her; but she is now two-and-twenty, and has been married almost two years. Believe me, Viscount, when a woman is so far incrusted, she must be left to her fate; she will never be any thing more than an undistinguishable individual of a species.

And for such a curious object you refuse to obey me; you bury yourself in your aunt's sepulchre; you abandon a most delicious adventure that is marked

out for the advancement of your reputation. By what fatality is it, that Gercourt must always have the advantage of you?

I declare I am not out of temper: but at this instant I am inclined to think you don't deserve the reputation you possess; and I consider your conduct with such a degree of indignation, as tempts me to withdraw my confidence from you. No, I never can bring myself to make Madame de Tourvel's lover the confidant of my secret designs.

I will tell you, however, that the little Volanges has made a conquest. Young Danceny is distracted for her. He has sung with her, and she really sings better than belongs to a convent boarder. They have yet many duos to rehearse together, and I am much mistaken if she would not readily get into unison with him; it is true,

Danceny is but a boy yet, who will waste his time in making love, but never will come to the point. Little Volanges is wild enough; but at all events, it will never be so pleasing as you could have made it. I am out of temper with you, and shall most certainly fall out with the Chevalier when he comes home. I would advise him to be mild, for at this time I should feel no difficulty to break with him.

I am certain that if I had sense enough to break off with him now, he would be a prey to the most violent despair; yet nothing diverts me more than an enraged lover. He, perhaps, would call me perfidious, and that word has ever pleased me; it is, after the epithet cruel, the sweetest to a woman's ear, and the least painful to deserve. I will seriously ruminate on this rupture. You are the cause of all this—

I shall leave it on your conscience. Adieu! recommend me to your Presidente in her prayers.

*Paris, Aug. 7, 17—.*

---

## LETTER VI.

VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to the* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL.

THERE is then no woman that does not abuse the empire she has gained; and you, whom I have so often called my indulgent friend, are no longer so, you are not afraid to attack me even in the very object of my affections. What a picture have you drawn of Madame de Tourvel! What man would not have forfeited his life by so daring an act of insolence? And what woman

but you would not, at least, have determined me to blast her reputation? For heaven's sake! never put me to such rude trials again. I will not be answerable for the consequence. In the name of friendship, have patience till I have this woman, if you must slander her. Don't you know, that the time for its causing any impression on me will be after I have enjoyed her? But where do I wander? Does Madame de Tourvel, in order to inspire a passion, need any deception? No; to be adorable, 'tis enough she is herself. You find fault with her dress: you are right; all ornaments are prejudicial to her; every thing that hides her lovely form is hurtful. It is in unaffected negligence she is truly ravishing. Thanks to the suffocating heat of the season, a deshabille of plain lawn adorns her charming, easy shape. A thin muslin handkerchief covers her

bosom; and my stolen, but penetrating glances, have already seized its enchanting form. You say her figure has no expression. What should it express, when nothing speaks to her heart? No, indubitably, she has not, like our coquettes, those false looks, which sometimes seduce, but ever deceive. She knows not how to fill up a void of phrase by an affected smile; and though she has the finest teeth in the world, she only laughs at what pleases her. But she is particularly admirable in the most trifling amusements, where she gives the picture of the frankest and most natural gaiety. In visiting a wretched being that she hastens to relieve, her looks declare the unsullied joy and compassionate bounty of her heart. At the most trifling expression of praise or flattery, the tender embarrassment of unaffected modesty is suffused over her celestial figure. She is

a prude and devotee, and thence you conclude, she is cold and inanimate. I think quite otherwise. What astonishing sensibility must she not have, to diffuse it as far as her husband, and to love a being always absent! What stronger proof can you require? I found out a method, however, to obtain another; I directed our walk in such a manner that we had a ditch to leap over, and although very active, she is still more timid---you may very well judge a prude dreads taking a leap. She was obliged to trust herself to me. I raised this modest woman in my arms. Our preparations, and the skip of my old aunt, made our sprightly devotee laugh most immoderately: but as soon as I seized on her, by a dexterous awkwardness, our arms were mutually entwined in each other; I prest her bosom against mine, and in this short interval I felt her heart pal-

pitate more quickly; a lovely blush covered her face, and her modest embarrassment informed me her heart beat with love and not with fear. My aunt was deceived as you had been, and said, "The child is frightened;" but the charming candour of this child would not permit her to countenance a lie, and she ingenuously answered, "Oh, no; but---" That word alone has cleared up my doubts. From this instant, sweet hope has banished cruel inquietude. I will have this woman. I will take her from a husband who does not deserve her. I'll even snatch her from the god she adores.

How delicious to be by turns the object and conqueror of her remorse! Far be from me the idea of curing her of her prejudices! they will add to my glory and happiness. Let her rely on her virtue, and sacrifice it. Let her crime terrify her, without being

able to resist its impulse; and, alarmed with a thousand terrors, let her neither be able to forget or conquer them but in my embraces.

Then I'll consent to her saying, "I "adore thee." She, of all your sex, will be the only one worthy to pronounce that word. Then shall I truly be the god of her idolatry. Confess ingenuously to me, that in our arrangements, as indifferent as they are free, what we style happiness scarce deserves the name of pleasure. I'll freely acknowledge, I imagined my heart withered, and incapable only of sensual gratification; I began to deplore my prematurely advanced age; Madame de Tourvel has restored me to the illusive charms of youth. With her, actual enjoyment is not necessary to my happiness. The only thing that alarms me is the time this adventure will take up; for I am resolved to risk nothing.

In vain do I bring to remembrance my successful acts of temerity on many occasions; I can't think of attempting them now. To crown my bliss, she must give herself up, and that's not an easy matter to accomplish.

I am confident even you must approve my discretion, for as yet I have not mentioned the word love; but we are already got as far as those of friendship and confidence. In order to deceive her as little as possible, and, above all, to guard against any thing that may come to her knowledge which might shock her, I have myself related to her, by way of self-accusation, some of my most remarkable adventures. You would be delighted to see how innocently she catechises me. She says she is determined to make a convert of me: but has not the least suspicion how much the purchase will cost her. She does not think, that her becomin

advocate, to use her own words, *for the many I have undone,* she is beforehand pleading her own cause.

This idea struck me yesterday, in the midst of one of her little sermons, and I could not resist the pleasure of interrupting her, to tell her that she spoke like a prophet. Adieu, my lovely friend! you see I am not totally lost.

P. S. But what's become of our poor Chevalier? Has he destroyed himself in a fit of despair? Indeed you are a million of times worse than I; and if I was vain, you'd mortify me to be so much outdone.

*From the Castle of ——,*
*Aug.* 9, 17—.

## LETTER VII.

### Cecilia Volanges *to* Sophia Carnay.*

If I have not said any thing to you as yet of my marriage, it is because I am as ignorant of the matter as the first day I came home. I begin to accustom myself not to think about it, and I am very happy as I am. I practice my harpsichord and singing much; and I am fonder of them than when I

* Not to tire the reader's patience, we suppress many of the letters of this daily correspondence, and give only them we think necessary for unfolding the events of this society. For the same reason we suppress all those of Sophia Carnay, and several of those of the actors in this piece.

had a master, or rather now I have got a better one. The Chevalier Danceny, the gentleman I mentioned to you before, with whom I sang at Madame Merteuil's, is so obliging to come every day to sing with me for hours together. He is exceedingly agreeable. He sings like an angel, and sets the words of his own composition to very pretty music. It is a great pity he is a Knight of Malta! I think, were he to embark in wedlock, his wife would be very happy. He is the sweetest creature breathing. Without the affectation of complaisance, every thing he does is endearing. He always chides me about music, or some other trifle; but he blends with his censures so much concern and good nature, that one can't help being pleased. His very looks seem to speak obliging things. And with all this, he is the most complaisant man possible: for instance; yesterday

he was asked to a private concert, but spent the evening at Mamma's, which gratified me exceedingly; for, when he is absent, I have no one to speak to, and am quite stupid: but, when he is with us, we chat and sing together, and he always has something to say to me. Madame de Merteuil and he are the only two amiable persons I yet know. Adieu, my dear friend! I promised to be perfect to-day in a little air, with a very difficult accompanyment, and I must keep my word. I must set about practising it against his return.

*From ——, Aug.* 7, 17—.

## LETTER VIII.

PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL *to* MADAME DE VOLANGES.

PERMIT me, Madam, to assure you, no one can be more sensible of the confidence you repose in me, nor have more at heart the happy establishment of Mademoiselle de Volanges than I have. With my whole soul I wish her that felicity which I am confident she merits, and which I have no doubt she will obtain through your prudence. I have not the honour of knowing Count Gercourt, but conceive the most favourable opinion of him, as he is your choice. I limit my good wishes to the hope that this match may be as happy as mine, which was also one of your

making, and which gratitude daily calls to my remembrance. May the happiness of Mademoiselle de Volanges be the reward of that I enjoy, and may the best of friends be also the happiest of mothers!

I am really mortified that I am not at present able, personally, to assure you of the grateful sentiments of my heart, and to accomplish what I wish for much, an acquaintance with Mademoiselle de Volanges.

After having experienced your maternal fondness, I think I am entitled to the tender friendship of a sister from her. I entreat you, Madam, to claim it for me, until I have it in my power to deserve it. I propose residing in the country during Mr. de Tourvel's absence. I now enjoy and improve in the respectable company of Madame Rosemonde. This lady is ever delightful; her great age has not the

least impaired her gaiety or memory; her body may be eighty-four, but her understanding is only twenty. Our retirement is enlivened by the Viscount Valmont, her nephew, who has condescended to spend a few days with us. I only knew him by character, which gave me an unfavourable opinion of him, that now I don't think he deserves. Here, where the bustle of the world does not affect him, he is very agreeable, and owns his failings with great candour. He converses with me very confidentially, and I sometimes sermonize him with asperity; you, who know him well, will, I dare say, think such a conversion worth attempting: but I am afraid, notwithstanding all his promises, eight days in Paris will destroy all my labours; however, his residence here will be so much gained from his general course of life, and I am clear, that the best thing he can do

will be to remain in inactivity. He knows that I am now writing to you, and begs leave to present his most respectful compliments. I beg you'll also accept mine with that condescension you have ever had for me, and be assured of the sincerity of the sentiments with which I have the honour to be, &c.

*From the Castle of* ———,
*Aug.* 9, 17—.

---

## LETTER IX.

MADAME DE VOLANGES *to the* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL.

I NEVER yet doubted, my young and charming friend, of your friendship for me, nor of the interest you take in

all my concerns. It is not to clear up this point, on which I hope we are for ever agreed, that I reply to your answer; but I think myself obliged to say a word or two relative to Viscount Valmont.

I must own, I did not expect to meet such a name in a letter from you. How is it possible there can be any communication between you and him? You do not know that man. Where did you find the idea you have imbibed of the heart of a libertine? You tell me of his uncommon candour; yes, truly, Valmont's candour is very uncommon. He is yet more false and dangerous than he is lovely and seducing: never since his earliest youth, has he taken a step, or spoke a word, without a design; and never formed a design that was not criminal or improper. My dear friend, you know me; you know that of all the virtues I en-

deavour to acquire, indulgence is the one I cherish most; and if Valmont had been hurried away by the impetuosity of his passions, or if, like a thousand more at his time of life, he had been seduced by the errors of youth, I would have compassionated his person, blamed his conduct, and have patiently waited until time, the happy maturer of green years, should have made him fit for the society and esteem of worthy people: but that's not Valmont's case; his conduct is the result of principle; he calculates how far a man can proceed in villainy without risking reputation, and has chosen women for his victims, that his sacrifices may be wicked and cruel without danger. I shall not dwell on the numbers he has seduced; but how many has he not utterly undone? Those scandalous anecdotes never come within the sphere of your retired and re-

gular course of life. I could, however, relate you some that would make you shudder; but your mind, pure as your soul, would be defiled with such descriptions: convinced, as I am, that Valmont will never be an object of danger to you, such armour is unnecessary to guard you. I can't, however, refrain telling you, that successful or not, no woman he ever yet dangled after, but had reason to repent her folly. The only exception to this general rule is the Marchioness de Merteuil; she alone has been capable not only of resisting, but of completely defeating his wickedness.

I must acknowledge this trait in her character strikes me the most forcibly; and has amply justified her to the world for some trifling indiscretions in the outset of her widowhood.* How-

* Madame de Volange's error informs us,

ever, my charming friend, authorised as I am, by age, experience, and much more by friendship, I am obliged to inform you, the world take notice of Valmont's absence; and that if they come to know that he has for any time formed a trio with you and his aunt, your reputation will be at his mercy, which is the greatest misfortune that can happen to a woman. I therefore advise you to prevail on his aunt not to detain him longer; and if he should still determine to remain, I think you should not hesitate a moment on quitting the place. But why should he remain? How does he employ himself in the country? I am certain, if his motions were watched, you would discover that he has only taken up his residence in that commodious retreat for the accomplishment of some act of

that Valmont, like most profligate wretches, did not impeach his accomplices.

villainy he meditates in the neighbourhood.

When it is not in our power to prevent an evil, let us at least take care to preserve ourselves from its consequences: Adieu! my lovely friend. An accident retards my daughter's marriage for some little time. Count Gercourt, whom we daily expected, informs me his regiment is ordered for Corsica; and as the military operations are not yet over, it will be impossible for him to return before winter: this disconcerts me; however, it gives me hope we shall have your company at the wedding; and I was vexed it should take place without you. Adieu! I am as free from compliment as reserve, entirely your's.

P. S. Bring me back to the recollection of Madame de Rosemond, whom I shall always love for her great merit.

## LETTER X.

*The* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL, *to* VISCOUNT VALMONT.

ARE you out of temper with me, Viscount, or are you dead, or, which is pretty much the same, do you live no longer but for your Presidente? This woman, who has restored you to the *illusive charms of youth*, will also soon restore you to its ridiculous follies. You are already a timid slave; you may as well be in love at once. You renounce your *happy acts of temerity on many occasions*; and thus, without any principle to direct you, give yourself up to caprice, or rather chance. Do you know that love is like physic, *only the art of as-*

*sisting nature?* You see I fight you on your own ground, but it shall not excite any vanity in me; for there is no great honour in engaging a vanquished enemy. *She must give herself up,* you tell me; without doubt she must, and will, as others, but with this difference, that she'll do it awkwardly. But that it may terminate in her giving herself up, the true method is to begin by taking her. What a ridiculous distinction, what nonsense in a love matter; I say love; for you really are in love. To speak otherwise would be deceiving you, would be concealing your disorder from you. Tell me, then, my dear sighing swain, of the different women you have had, do you think you gained any of them by force? Whatever inclination we may have to yield, however we feel our compliance unavoidable, still must there be a pre-

tence; and can there be a more commodious one for us, than that which gives us the appearance of being overcome by force? For my part, I own nothing charms me so much as a brisk lively attack, where every thing is carried on with regularity, but with rapidity; which never puts us to the painful dilemma of being ourselves constrained to remedy an awkwardness which, on the contrary, we should convert to our advantage; and which keeps up the appearance of violence, even when we yield, and dexterously flatters our two favourite passions, the glory of a defence, and the pleasure of a defeat. I must own that this talent, which is more uncommon than one would imagine, always pleased me, even when it did not guide me; and that it has sometimes happened that I have only surrendered from grati-

tude; thus, in our tournaments of old, beauty gave the prize to valour and address.

But you, you who are no longer yourself, you proceed as if you dreaded success. And pray how long is it since you have fallen into the method of travelling so gently, and in such bye-roads? Believe me, when one has a mind to arrive, post-horses and the high road is the only method.

But let us drop this subject; it the more puts me out of temper, as it deprives me of the pleasure of seeing you. At least, write me oftener than you do, and acquaint me with your progress. You seem to forget that this ridiculous piece of business has already taken up a fortnight of your time, and that you neglect every body.

Now I mention neglect, you resemble those who send regularly to inquire of the state of health of their sick

friends, and who never concern themselves about the answer. You finish your last letter by asking whether the Chevalier is dead. I make no reply, and you are no farther concerned about the matter; have you forgot my lover is your sworn friend? But comfort yourself; he is not dead; or if he was, it would be from excess of pleasure. This poor Chevalier, how tender! How formed for love! How sensibly he affects one! He distracts me. Seriously, then, his happiness in being loved by me, inspires me with a true affection for him.

The very day I wrote you that I was taken up in contriving our rupture, how happy did I not make him! And yet I was in earnest engaged how I should make him desperate when he appeared. Whether whim or inclination, he never appeared to so much advantage. However, I received him

coolly; he expected to spend a couple of hours with me before my time of seeing company. I told him I was going abroad, he begg'd to know where; I refused to tell him. He insisted to know; *where you will not be*, I replied with some tartness. Happily for him he was petrified at my answer; for had he pronounced a syllable, a scene would have ensued which would infallibly have brought on the intended rupture. Astonished at his silence, I cast a look at him, with no other design, I swear, but to observe his countenance; I was instantly struck with the deep and tender sadness that covered this charming figure, which you have owned it is so difficult to resist. The same cause produced the same effect; I was a second time overcome; from that instant I endeavoured to prevent his having any reason to complain. I am going out on business, said I, in a

milder tone, and the business relates to you; ask no more questions. I shall sup at home; at your return you'll know all: he then recovered his speech; but I would not suffer him to go on. I'm in great haste, continued I. Leave me until night. He kissed my hand and departed. In order to make him, or perhaps myself, amends, I immediately resolved to shew him my villa, of which he had not the least suspicion; I called my faithful maid, Victoire. I am seized with my dizziness, said I; let all my servants know I am gone to bed; when alone, I desired her to put on a footman's dress, and metamorphosed myself into a chamber-maid.

She ordered a hackney-coach to my garden-door, and we instantly set out. Being arrived at this temple dedicated to love, I put on my genteelest deshabille; a most delicious one, and of my own invention: it leaves nothing

exposed, but every thing for fancy to imagine. I promise you the pattern for your Presidente, when you shall have rendered her worthy of wearing it.

After those preparations, whilst Victoire was taken up with other matters, I read a chapter of the Sopha, a letter of the New Eloisa, and two of La Fontaine's Tales, to rehearse the different characters I intended to assume. In the mean time, my Chevalier came to my house, with his usual eagerness. My porter refused him admittance, and informing him I was indisposed, delivered him a note from me, but not of my writing; according to my usual discretion. He opens, and finds in Victoire's writing — "At nine precisely, at the Boulevard, opposite the coffee-houses."

Thither he proceeds, and a little footman whom he does not know, or at

least thinks he does not know, for it was Victoire, tells him he must send back his carriage and follow him. All this romantic proceeding heated his imagination, and on such occasions a heated imagination is useful. At last he arrives, and love and astonishment produced in him the effect of a real enchantment. In order to give him time to recover from his surprise, we walked a while in the grove; I then brought him back to the house. The first thing which presented itself to his view, was a table with two covers, and a bed prepared. From thence we went into the cabinet, which was most elegantly decorated. There, in suspense, between reflection and sentiment, I flung my arms around him, and letting myself fall at his knees—"Alas! my dear friend," said I, "what reproaches do I not deserve, for having, for a moment, *given you* uneasiness by an affected ill-

humour, in order to enhance the pleasure and surprise of this moment, for having concealed my heart from your tenderness! Forgive me; I will expiate my crime with the most ardent love." You may guess what was the effect of this sentimental declaration. The happy Chevalier raised me, and my pardon was sealed on the same sopha where you and I, in a similar way, so cheerfully sealed our eternal rupture.

As we had six hours to pass together, and that I was determined the whole time should be devoted to delight him, I moderated his transports, and called lovely coquetry to the aid of tenderness. I don't know I ever took so much pains to please, or ever, in my own opinion, succeeded so well. After supper, by turns, childish and rational, wanton and tender, sometimes even libertine. I took pleasure in consider-

ing him as a Sultan, in the midst of his Seraglio, to whom I alternately supplied the places of different favourites; and indeed, his reiterated offerings, though always received by the same woman, were received as by a new mistress.

At length, when day appeared, it was necessary to part; and notwithstanding all he said, and even what he did, to prove the contrary, there was, on his part, as much necessity for it, as want of inclination. At the instant of parting, for a last adieu, I delivered him the key of this happy mansion: I had it for you alone, said I, and it is fit you should be the master of it; it is but right the high priest should dispose of the temple. By this artifice, I anticipated any reflections which might arise in his mind relative to the propriety of a villa, which is ever matter of suspicion. I know him so well, that

I'm certain he will never make use on't but for me; and if I should have a fancy to go there without him, I have another key. He by all means would make an appointment for another day; but I as yet love him too much, to wear him out soon; the true maxim is, not give into excess, but with those one wishes to be rid of. This he is a stranger to; but, happily for him, I know it for us both.

I perceive it is now three in the morning, and that I have wrote a volume, though I intended but a short letter. Such are the charms of confidential friendship; it is that confidential friendship that renders you the object I love most; but indeed the Chevalier is the object that pleases me most.

*From* ——, *Aug.* 12, 17—.

## LETTER XI.

*The* Presidente de Tourvel *to* Madame Volanges.

The severity of your letter would have terrified me strangely, dear madam, if I had not here stronger reasons to think myself perfectly safe, than those you give me for apprehension. The formidable Mr. de Valmont, the terror of our sex, seems to have laid aside his murderous arms, before he entered this castle. Far from having formed any design, he did not even appear to have brought any claims; and the accomplishments of an amiable man, which his enemies even give to him, almost vanish to give place to the character of good-natured creature. Probably it is

the country air has wrought this miracle; one thing I can assure you, tho' incessantly with me, even seemingly pleased with my company, not a word that has the least tendency to love has escaped him, not even one of those phrases that most men assume, without having, like him, any thing to plead in their justification. Never does he put one under the necessity of flying for shelter to that reservedness to which a woman, who will maintain her dignity, is obliged to have recourse now-a-days, to keep the men within bounds. He does not abuse the gaiety he inspires. Perhaps he flatters a little too much; but it is with so much delicacy, that he would reconcile even modesty to praise. To conclude, had I a brother, I would wish him to be what Mr. de Valmont is here. There are many women, perhaps, would wish him to have a more *pointed* gallantry; and I own I am

greatly obliged to him for the good opinion he entertains, by not confounding me with them.

This description undoubtedly differs very much from that you have given me; and yet they may both carry a resemblance, if we ascertain our times. He himself agrees he has done many wrong things; and, perhaps, the world has imputed many more to him. But I have seldom met with men who spoke more respectfully of women of character, almost to enthusiasm.

In this point, at least, you inform me he is not a deceiver. I rest the proof on his conduct to Madame de Merteuil. He often speaks of her; and always so much in her praise, and with the appearance of so much affection, that I imagined, until I received your letter, that what he had called friendship was really love. I condemn myself for my rash opinion, in which I am

the more blameable, as he himself has frequently spoke in her justification; and I own his honest sincerity I looked on as artifice. I don't know, but it appears to me, that the man who is capable of so constant a friendship for a deserving woman, cannot be an abandoned libertine; but whether we are to attribute his prudent conduct here to any scheme in this neighbourhood, as you suppose, is a question. There are some few agreeable women around us; however, he seldom goes abroad except in the morning, and then he says he goes a shooting; he seldom brings home any game, it is true, but he tells us he is a bad shot. However, what he does out of doors, concerns me but little; and if I wished to be informed, it would be only to have one more reason to come into your opinion, or to bring you over to mine.

As to what you propose, that I

should endeavour to shorten the time of Mr. de Valmont's residence here, it appears to me a matter of some difficulty, to desire an aunt not to have her nephew with her; and a nephew for whom she has the greatest affection. However, I promise you, through deference only, and not that I see any necessity for it, to take the first opportunity to make this request either to him or her. As to myself, Mr. de Tourvel is acquainted with my intention of remaining here until his return, and he would, with reason, be astonished at my levity. Thus, Madam, I have given you a long explanation; but I thought a justification of Mr. de Valmont to you, where it appears very necessary, a debt to truth. I am not the less sensible of the friendship which suggested your advice. I am also indebted to it for the obliging manner in which you acquaint me of

the delay of Madame de Volange's nuptials, for which accept my most sincere thanks; but whatever pleasure I might expect on that occasion in your company, would be willingly sacrificed to the satisfaction of knowing M. de Volange's happiness sooner completed, if, after all, she can be more so than with a mother, every way deserving her respect and tenderness. I partake with her those sentiments which attach me to you, and beg you'll receive this assurance of them with your usual goodness.

I have the honour to be, &c.

*From* ——, *Aug*. 13, 17—.

## LETTER XII.

CECILIA VOLANGES *to the* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL.

MADAM,

MY Mamma is indisposed; she will not go out to-day, and I must keep her company: thus I am deprived the honour of attending you to the opera. I assure you I regret more the loss of your company than the performance. I hope you are persuaded of this, for I have a great affection for you. Be so good to tell the Chevalier Danceny, I have not yet got the collection which he mentioned, and that if he can bring it himself to-morrow, I shall be obliged to him. If he comes to-day, he will be told we are not at home; but

the reason is, Mamma sees no company. I hope she will be better to-morrow.

I have the honour, &c.

*From ——, Aug. 13, 17—.*

---

## LETTER XIII.

*The* Marchioness de Merteuil *to* Cecilia Volanges.

I am much concerned, my charming girl, to be deprived of the pleasure of seeing you, as well as for the cause; I hope we shall find another opportunity. I performed your commission with the Chevalier Danceny, who will certainly be very sorry to hear of your Mamma's indisposition; if she'll admit me to-morrow, I'll wait on her. She and I will attack the Chevalier de

Bellroche at piquet *; and in winning his money, we shall have the double pleasure of hearing you sing with your amiable master, to whom I shall propose it. If it be agreeable to your Mamma and you, I will answer for my two Knights and myself. Adieu, my lovely girl! My compliments to Madame de Volanges. I embrace you most affectionately.

*From* ——, *Aug.* 13, 17—.

---

## LETTER XIV.

### Cecilia Volanges *to* Sophia Carnay.

I did not write to you yesterday, my dear Sophy; but I assure you it wa

* This is the same who is mentioned in Madame de Merteuil's letters.

not pleasure that prevented me. My Mamma was indisposed, and I did not quit her the whole day. At night, when I retired, I had not spirits to do any thing; and I went to bed very early, in order to terminate the day: never did I pass so long a one. It is not but I love Mamma very much; but I don't know how it was. I was to have gone to the opera with Madame de Merteuil; the Chevalier Danceny was to have been there. You know they are the two I love most. When the hour of the opera arrived, my heart was oppressed in spite of me; every thing displeased me, and I wept involuntarily. Fortunately Mamma was in bed, and could not see me. I am sure Chevalier Danceny must have been chagrined as well as I; but the company and performance must have amused him: I am very differently situated. But Mamma is better to-

day, and Madame de Merteuil, Chevalier Danceny, and another gentleman, will be with us. Madame de Merteuil comes late, and it's very tiresome to be so long alone. It is only eleven, yet I must practise my harpsichord, it is true; and then my toilet will take me up some time, for I will have my head well drest to-day. I really believe our mother Abbess was right, that one becomes a coquet on entering into life. I never had so strong a desire to be handsome, as for some days past, and I think I am not so handsome as I thought; in women's company that paint, one looks much worse; for example, all the men think Madame de Merteuil handsomer than me; that does not vex me much, because she loves me: and then she assures me the Chevalier Danceny thinks me handsomer than her. It is very good natured of her to tell me so; she even seemed to be glad of it. Now

I don't conceive how that can be. It is because she loves me so much! And he too! Oh that gives me infinite pleasure! I really think, barely looking at him makes me appear handsome. I would always be looking at him, if I was not afraid of meeting his eyes: for as often as that happens, it disconcerts me, and gives me uneasiness; but that signifies nothing. Adieu, my dear Sophy! I am going to dress.

*Paris, Aug.* 14, 17—.

---

## LETTER XV.

VISCOUNT VALMONT *to the* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL.

INDEED you are very kind not to abandon me to my melancholy fate:

the life I lead here is really fatiguing, from excess of repose and insipid uniformity. Reading your letter with the particulars of your delightful excursion, I was tempted twenty times to pretend business, fly to your feet, and beg of you to commit, in my favour, an infidelity to your Chevalier, who really does not deserve his bliss. Do you know you have roused my jealousy? Why tell me of an eternal rupture? I recant an oath taken in a fit of frensy. We should not have been entitled to so solemn a privilege, had we seriously intended to keep it. Ah, may I be one day revenged in your embraces, for the vexation the Chevalier's happiness gives me! I am all indignation I own, to think that a man who has scarce common sense, without taking the least trouble, and only simply following the instinct of his heart, should find a happiness I can't attain. Oh, I will dis-

turb him: promise me I shall disturb him! But have you not humiliated yourself? You take the trouble to deceive him, and he is happier than you. You think you have him in your toils, but you are in his. He sleeps quietly, whilst you wake for his pleasures. What could his slaves do more?

Hark ye, my lovely friend, while you divide yourself among many, I am not in the least jealous; I then look down on your lovers as on Alexander's successors; incapable of preserving among them that empire where I reigned sole monarch; but that you should give yourself up entirely to one of them, that another should exist as happy as me, I will not suffer; don't expect I'll bear it! Either take me again, or take another; and do not, by any exclusive caprice, betray the inviolable friendship we have sworn to each other.

Is it not curious, that I should have reason to complain of love? You see I give into your ideas, and confess my errors. If not to be able to exist without the possession of what we desire, if to sacrifice time, pleasure, and life for it, then am I really in love; and I have made no progress. I should not even have a word to say to you on the subject, but for an accident that racks my imagination, and leaves me in suspense between hope and fear.

You know my huntsman; a treasure of intrigue, and a true valet as ever dramatic pen drew. You may conceive he had it in his instructions to be in love with the waiting-maid, and make the servants drunk.

The rascal is happier than his master; he has already succeeded; and has just discovered that Madame de Tourvel has appointed one of her people to observe me, and even to follow me in

my morning excursions, as much as possible, without being perceived.

What does this woman mean? Thus, then, the most virtuous of them will venture to do things, that one of us would not dare think on! Well, I swear—but before I think of being revenged for this female artifice, I will endeavour to convert it to my advantage. Hitherto those suspected excursions had no view; I must give them one. This deserves my utmost attention, and I quit you to reflect on it. Adieu, my charming friend!

*Always from the Castle of——,*
*Aug*, 15, 17—.

## LETTER XVI.

### Cecilia Volanges *to* Sophia Carnay.

Ah, Sophia, I have a deal of news! But may be I should not tell you: I must tell it, however, to somebody, I can't keep it. Chevalier Danceny— I'm in such trouble, I can't write; I don't know where to begin. Since the agreeable evening that I related to you I spent at Mamma's*, with him and Madame de Merteuil, I said no more of him: that was because I resolved not to say any more of him to any one;

* The letter that is mentioned here was not found; but there is reason to believe that it is that Madame de Merteuil mentions in her letter *which* Cecilia Volanges refers to.

but I was always thinking of him notwithstanding. Since that, he is become so melancholy, that it makes me uneasy; and when I asked him the reason, he answered me he was not so, but I could plainly see he was. He was yesterday more so than usual; that did not, however, prevent him from singing with his usual complaisance; but every time he looked at me, my heart was ready to break. After we had done singing, he locked up my harpsichord; and bringing me the key, begged I would play again in the evening when I was alone. I had no suspicion of any thing; I even refused him: but he insisted so much, that I promised I would. He had his reasons for it. When I retired to my room, and my maid was gone, I went to my harpsichord. I found hid among the strings an unsealed letter from him. Ah, if you did but know all he writes!

Since I read his letter, I am in such raptures I can think of nothing else. I read it over four times running, and then locked it in my desk. I got it by heart; and when I laid down I repeated it so often, I could not think of sleeping; as soon as I shut my eyes, I thought I saw him, telling me every thing I had just read. I did not sleep till very late; and, as soon as I awoke, (though it was very early,) I got up for the letter, to read it at my leisure; I took it into bed, and began to kiss it, as if——but may be I did wrong to kiss a letter thus, but I could not help it.

Now, my dear friend, if I am very well pleased, I am also very much troubled; for certainly I must not answer it. I know that must not be, and yet he urges it; and if I don't answer it, I am certain he will be again melancholy. It is a great pity; what

would you advise me to? But you know no more than I.. I have a great mind to tell Madame de Merteuil, who has a great affection for me. I wish I could console him; but I would not do any thing wrong. We are taught good-nature, and yet we are forbid to follow its dictates, when a man is in question. That I can't understand. Is not a man our neighbour as well as a woman, and still more so? For have we not a father as well as a mother, a brother as well as a sister, and there is the husband besides? Yet if I was to do any thing that was not right, perhaps Mr. Danceny himself would no longer have a good opinion of me! Oh, then I would rather he should be melancholy! And I shall still be time enough; though he wrote yesterday, I am not obliged to write to-day; and I shall see Madame de Merteuil this evening, and if I can

have so much resolution, I will tell her all. Following her advice, I shall have nothing to reproach myself; and may be she may tell me I may give him a few words of answer, that he may not be melancholy. I'm in great uneasiness! Adieu! Be sure tell me what you think I ought to do.

*Aug.* 13, 17—.

---

## LETTER XVII.

*The Chevalier* DANCENY *to* CECILIA VOLANGES.

BEFORE I give way, Miss, whether shall I call it, to the pleasure or necessity of writing to you, I begin by entreating you to hear me: I am sensible I stand in need of your indulgence,

in daring to declare my sentiments for you; if they wanted only vindication, indulgence would be useless. Yet, after all, what am I about to do, but exhibit your own productions? I have nothing to say that my looks, my confusion, my conduct, and even my silence, have not already told you! Why should you be displeased with sentiments to which you have given birth? Proceeding from you, they certainly should be offered you; if they are as inflamed as my heart, they are as chaste as your own. Where is the crime to have discovered how to set a proper value on your charms, your bewitching qualifications, your enchanting graces, and that affecting ingenuousness which so much enhances such valuable accomplishments? No; undoubtedly there is not: but one may be unhappy, without being guilty, which must be my fate, should you refuse to

accept a homage, the first my heart ever made. Were it not for you, I should still have been, if not happy, yet undisturbed. I saw you, and tranquillity fled my soul, and left my happiness uncertain!

And yet you seem to wonder at my grief, and demand the cause; I have even sometimes thought it gave you uneasiness. Ah, speak but the word, and my felicity will be complete! But before you pronounce it, remember it may also overwhelm me in misery. Be the arbitress of my fate, you can make me happy or miserable for ever; into what dearer hands can I commit such a trust? I shall finish as I began, by imploring your indulgence; I have intreated you to hear me; I shall farther presume to beg an answer. If refused, I shall think you are offended; though my heart is witness, my respect equals my love.

P. S. If you indulge me with an answer, you can convey it in the same way through which manner you receive this: it is both safe and commodious.

*Aug.* 18, 17—.

---

## LETTER XVIII.

CECILIA VOLANGES *to* SOPHIA CARNAY.

WHAT, my Sophia, you blame beforehand the step I intend to take! I had uneasiness enough already, but you add considerably to it. You say, I certainly ought not to answer his letter; you are quite at your ease, and can give advice; but you know not how I am circumstanced, and are not able, not being on the spot, to give an

opinion. Sure I am, were you so situated, you would act as I do. Certainly, according to etiquette, I should not answer his letter; and by my letter of yesterday, you may perceive my intention was not to reply; but I don't think any one was ever so circumstanced as I am.

And, then, to be left to my own discretion! For Madame de Merteuil, whom I depended on seeing in the evening, did not come. Every thing is against me; she is the cause of my knowing him. In her company, it has almost always been, that I have seen and spoke to him. It is not that I have any ill-will towards her for it—but I'm left to myself when I want her advice most. Well, I'm greatly to be pitied! Only think, yesterday he came as usual. I was so confused I could not look at him; he could not speak to me, for Mamma was with us.

I knew he would be vexed when he found I had not wrote to him; I did not know how to appear. He immediately asked me if I had a mind he should bring my harpsichord. My heart beat so I could scarcely say yes. When he returned it was much worse. I just glanced at him. He did not see me, but looked as if he was ill; that made me very unhappy. He tuned my harpsichord, and said, with a sigh, Ah, Miss! He spoke but those two words; and in such a tone as threw me into the greatest confusion. I struck a few chords without knowing what I did: Mamma asked him to sing; he excused himself, saying, he was not well; but I had no excuse, and was forced to sing. I then wished I had no voice; and chose, on purpose, a song that I did not know; for I was certain I could not sing any one, and some notice would have been taken.

Fortunately a visitor came; and as soon as I heard a coach coming, I stopped, and begged he would put up my harpsichord. I was much afraid he would then go away, but he returned. Whilst Mamma and the lady, who came, were chatting together, I wished to look at him for a moment; I met his eyes, and I could not turn mine from him. That instant I saw his tears flow, and he was obliged to turn his head aside to hide them. I found I could not withstand it; and that I was also ready to weep. I retired, and instantly wrote with a pencil on a slip of paper, "I beg you'll not be so dejected; I "promise to answer your letter."— Surely you can't say there was any harm in this; I could not help it. I put my note in the strings of my harpsichord, as his was, and returned to the saloon. I found myself much easier, and was impatient until the lady went

away. She was on her visits, and soon retired. As soon as she was gone, I said I would again play on my harpsichord, and begged he would bring it. I saw by his looks he suspected nothing; but when he returned, oh, he was so pleased! In laying the instrument before me, he placed himself in such a manner that Mamma could not see, and squeezed my hand—but it was but for a moment: I can't express the pleasure I received; I drew it away however; so that I have nothing to reproach myself with.

Now, my dear friend, you see I can't avoid writing to him, since I have promised; and I will not chagrin him any more I am determined; for I suffer more than he does. Certainly, as to any thing bad, I would not be guilty of it; but what harm can there be in writing, when it is to prevent one

from being unhappy? What puzzles me is, that I shall not know what to say; but that signifies nothing; and I am certain its coming from me will be quite sufficient.

Adieu, my dear friend! If you think me wrong, tell me; but I don't believe I am. As the time draws near to write to him, my heart beats strangely; however, it must be so, as I have promised it.

*From ——, Aug. 20, 17—.*

## LETTER XIX.

### Cecilia Volanges *to* Chevalier Danceny.

You was so pensive, Sir, yesterday, and it gave me so much uneasiness to see you so, that I could not avoid promising to answer the letter you wrote me. I now think it unbecoming; yet, as I promised, I will not break my word, a proof of the friendship I have for you. Now I have made this acknowledgment, I hope you will never more ask me to write to you again, or ever let any one know I have wrote to you; for I should most certainly be blamed, and it might occasion me a deal of uneasiness. But above all, I hope you will not have a bad opinion of me, which would give me the

greatest concern; for I assure you, I could not have been induced to do this by any one else. I wish much you would not be so melancholy as you have been lately, as it deprives me of all the satisfaction I have in your company. You see, Sir, I speak very sincerely to you. I wish much that our friendship may be lasting; but I beg you'll write to me no more.

I have the honour to be,

CECILIA VOLANGES.

*Aug.* 20, 17—.

---

## LETTER XX.

*The* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL *to* VISCOUNT VALMONT.

So, knave, you begin to wheedle, lest I should laugh at you! Well, I for—

give you. You say so many ridiculous things, that I must pardon you, the trammels you are kept in by your Presidente; however, my Chevalier would be apt not to be so indulgent, and not to approve the renewal of our contract; neither would he find any thing very entertaining in your foolish whim. I laughed, however, exceedingly at it, and was truly sorry I was obliged to laugh alone. Had you been here, I don't know how far my good humour might have led me; but reflection came to my aid, and I armed myself with severity. It is not that I have determined to break off for ever; but I am resolved to delay for some time, and I have my reasons. Perhaps some vanity might arise in the case, and *that* once roused, one does not know whither it may lead. I should be inclined to enslave you again, and oblige you to give up your Presidente; but

if a person of my unworthiness should give you a disgust for virtue itself, in a human shape, what a scandal! To avoid this danger, these are my stipulations.

As soon as you have obtain'd your lovely devotee, and that you can produce your proofs, come, I am yours. But I suppose it unnecessary to inform you that, in important matters, none but written proofs are admitted. By this arrangement I shall, on the one hand, become a reward instead of a consolation, and this idea pleases me most: on the other hand, your success will be more brilliant, by becoming in the same moment the cause of an infidelity. Come then, come speedily, and bring the pledge of your triumph; like our valiant knights of old, who deposited, at their ladies' feet, the trophies of their victories. I am really curious to know what a prude can say

after such an adventure; what covering she can give her words after having uncovered her person. You are to judge whether I rate myself too high; but I must assure you beforehand, I will abate nothing. Till then, my dear Viscount, you must not be angry that I should be constant to my Chevalier, and that I should amuse myself in making him happy, although it may give you a little uneasiness.

If I was not so strict a moralist, I believe at this instant he would have a most dangerous rival in the little Volanges. I am bewitched with this little girl: it is a real passion. I am much mistaken, or she will be one day or other one of our most fashionable women. I can see her little heart expanding; and it is a most ravishing sight!---She already loves her Danceny to distraction, yet knows nothing of it; and he, though deeply smitten,

has that youthful timidity, that frightens him from declaring his passion. They are both in a state of mutual adoration before me: the girl has a great mind to disburden her heart, especially for some days past; and I should have done her immense service in assisting her a little; but she is yet a child, and I must not commit myself. Danceny has spoke plainer; but I will have nothing to do with him. As to the girl, I am often tempted to make her my pupil; it is a piece of service I'm inclined to do Gercourt. He gives me time enough, as he must remain in Corsica until October. I have in contemplation to employ that time effectually, and to give him a well trained wife, instead of an innocent convent pensioner. The insolent security of this man is surprising, who dares sleep quietly whilst a woman he has used ill is unrevenged! If the little thing was

now here, I do not know what I might say to her.

Adieu, Viscount---good night, and good success; but, for God's sake, dispatch. Remember, if you let this woman slip, the others will blush at having been unconnected with you.

*Aug.* 20, 17—.

---

## LETTER XXI.

*From* Viscount Valmont *to the* Marchioness de Merteuil.

I have at length, my dear friend, made an advance, and one of such importance, that though it has not led to the full completion of my wishes, convinces me I am in the right road, and dispels my dread of having gone astray. I

have at last made my declaration of love; and although the most obstinate silence was preserved, I have obtained an answer of the most flattering, unequivocal nature; yet, not to anticipate matters, but to recur to their origin: you may remember a spy was appointed over my proceedings; well, I determined this shameful treatment should be converted into the means of public edification; and I laid my plan thus: I ordered my confident to look out for some distressed person in the neighbourhood, who wanted relief. This you know was not a very difficult discovery. Yesterday evening he informed me that the effects of a whole family were to be seized on as this morning, for payment of taxes. I first took care to be certain that there was neither woman nor girl in the house, whose age or appearance could raise any suspicion of my intended scheme.

When I was satisfied of this, I mentioned at supper that I intended going a shooting next day. Here I must do my Presidente justice; she certainly felt some remorse for the orders she had given; and not being able to overcome her curiosity, she determined to oppose my design. It would be exceedingly hot; I should probably injure my health; I should kill nothing, and fatigue myself in vain; and during this conversation, her eyes, which spoke a plainer language than she perhaps intended, told me she wished those simple reasons should pass current. You may guess I did not assent to them, and even was proof against a smart invective upon shooting and sportsmen; I held my ground even against a little cloud of discontent that covered her celestial face during the rest of the evening. I was at one time afraid she had revoked her orders, and that her

delicacy would mar all. I did not reflect sufficiently on the strength of woman's curiosity, and was mistaken; my huntsman cleared up my doubts however that night, and I went to bed quite satisfied.

At daylight I rose, and set out. I was scarcely fifty yards from the castle, when I perceived my spy at my heels. I began to beat about, directing my course across the fields towards the village I had in view; my amusement on the way was making the fellow scamper; who, not daring to quit the high road, was often obliged to run over treble the ground I went. My exertions to give him exercise enough, put me in a violent heat, and I seated myself at the foot of a tree. And would you believe it, he had the insolence to slide behind a thicket not twenty yards from me, and seat himself also I once had a great incli-

nation to send him the contents of my piece, which, though only loaded with small shot, would have cured his curiosity; but I recollected he was not only useful, but even necessary to my designs, and that saved him. On my arrival at the village, all was bustle; I went on, and inquired what was the matter, which was immediately related to me. I ordered the collector to be sent for; and, giving way to my generous compassion, I nobly paid down fifty-six livres, for which five poor creatures were going to be reduced to straw and misery. On this trifling act, you can't conceive the chorus of blessings the bystanders joined in around me—what grateful tears flowed from the venerable father of the family, and embellished this patriarchal figure, which a moment before was hideously disfigured with the wild stamp of despair! While con-

templating this scene, a younger man, leading a woman with two children, advancing hastily towards me, said to to them, "Let us fall on our knees be-"fore this image of God;" and I was instantly surrounded by the whole family prostrate at my feet.

I must acknowledge my weakness; my eyes were full, and I felt within me an involuntary but exquisite emotion. I was amazed at the pleasure that is felt in doing a benevolent act; and I'm inclined to think, those we call virtuous people, have not so much merit as is ascribed to them. Be that as it may, I thought it fit to pay those poor people for the heart-felt satisfaction I had received. I had ten louis-d'ors in my purse, which I gave them; here acknowledgments were repeated, but not equally pathetic: the relief of want had produced the grand, the true effect; the rest was the mere conse-

quence of gratitude and surprise for a superfluous gift.

In the midst of the unmerited benedictions of this family, I had some resemblance to the hero of a drama in the *dénouement* of a play. Remark that the faithful spy was observable in the crowd. My end was answered: I disengaged myself from them, and returned to the castle.

Every thing considered, I applaud myself for my invention. This woman is well worth all my solicitude; and it will one day or other prove to be my title to her: having, as I may say, thus paid for her beforehand, I shall have a right to dispose of her at my will, without having any thing to reproach myself with.

I had almost forgot to tell you, that, to make the most of every thing, I begged the good people to pray for the success of my undertakings. You

shall now see whether their prayers have not already been in some measure efficacious. But I'm called to supper, and I should be too late for the post, if I did not now conclude. I am sorry for it, as the sequel is the best. Adieu, my lovely friend! You rob me a moment of the pleasure of seeing her.

*Aug.* 20, 17—.

---

## LETTER XXII.

*The* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL *to* MADAME DE VOLANGES.

YOU will, I doubt not, Madam, be desirous to be informed of an incident in the life of Mr. de Valmont, which seems to me to form a striking contrast to all those that have been related to

you. Nothing can be more painful than to think disadvantageously of any one, or so grievous as to find those who have every qualification to inspire the love of virtue, replete with vice; besides, you are so inclined to the exercise of the virtue of indulgence, that I think I can't please you more, than in fun ishing you motives for reconsidering any judgment you may have formed, that may be justly accused of rigour. Mr. Valmont now seems entitled to this favour, I may almost say to this act of justice, for the following reason:

This morning he went on one of those excursions, which might have given room to imagine a scheme in the neighbourhood; a supposition which, I must own, I too hastily adopted.

Happily for him, and still more happily for us, since it preserves us

from an act of injustice, one of my people had occasion to go the same way;* and thus my fortunate, but censurable curiosity was satisfied. He acquainted us that Mr. de Valmont, having found at the village of ——, an unhappy family whose effects were on the point of being sold for payment of taxes, not only discharged the debt for the poor people, but even gave them a pretty considerable sum besides. My servant was witness to this virtuous act; and informs me that the country people, in conversation, told him, that a servant, whom they described, and who mine believes to belong to Mr. de Valmont, had been yesterday at the village to make inquiry after objects of charity. This was not a transitory fit of compassion; it must have proceeded from determined benevolence, the no-

* Madame de Tourvel does not venture to say it is done by her order.

blest virtue of the noblest minds; but be it chance or design, you must allow, it is a worthy and laudable act; the bare recital of it melted me to tears! I will add also still farther, to do him justice, that when I mentioned this transaction, of which he had not given the least hint, he began by denying it to be founded; and even when he acquiesced, seemed to lay so little stress on it, that his modesty redoubled its merit. Now tell me, most venerable friend, if M. de Valmont is an irretrievable debauchee? If he is so, and behaves thus, where are we to look for men of principle? Is it possible that the wicked should participate with the good the extatic pleasures of benevolence? Would the Almighty permit that a virtuous poor family should receive aid from the hand of an abandoned wretch, and return thanks for it to his Divine Providence? And is it

possible to imagine the Creator would think himself honoured in hearing pure hearts pouring blessings on a reprobate? No; I am rather inclined to think that errors, although they may have been of some duration, are not eternal; and I cannot bring myself to think, that the man who acts well, is an enemy to virtue. Mr. de Valmont is only, perhaps, another example of the dangerous effects of connections. I embrace this idea, and it gratifies me. If, on the one hand, it clears up his character in your mind, it will, on the other, enhance the value of the tender friendship that unites me to you for life.

I am, &c.

P. S. Madame de Rosemonde and I are just going to see the poor honest family, and add our assistance to Mr. de Valmont's. We take him with us, and shall give those good people the

pleasure of again seeing their benefactor; which, I fancy, is all he has left us to do.

*Aug.* 20, 17—.

---

## LETTER XXIII.

*The* VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to the* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL.

I BROKE off at our return to the castle: Now to my narrative: I had scarce time to dress and return to the saloon, where my charmer was making tapestry, whilst the curate read the gazette to my old aunt. I placed myself near the frame. Softer looks than usual, almost bordering on fondness, soon informed me the spy had made a report of his business; and, in fact, the lovely

woman could no longer keep the secret; being under no apprehension of interrupting the good pastor, whose utterance was perfectly in the pulpit style. I have also some news to tell, said she, and immediately related my adventure with an exactitude that did honour to her historian's accuracy. You may guess how my modesty displayed itself; but who can stop a woman's tongue, who unconsciously praises the man she loves? I determined to let her go on. One would have imagined she was preaching the panegyric of some saint, whilst I, not without a degree of hope, attentively observed every circumstance that bore an appearance propitious to love: her animated look, free action, and above all, the tone of her voice, which, by a sensible alteration, betrayed the emotion of her soul. She had scarcely finished, when Madame de Rosemonde said, "Come, my dear

"nephew, let me embrace you." I soon concluded the lovely panegyrist could not offer an objection to my saluting her in turn. She attempted to fly; but I soon seized her in my arms; and far from being able to resist, she had scarce power to support herself. The more I contemplate this woman, the more amiable she is. She hastened back to her frame, with every appearance of resuming her work, but in such confusion, that her hand shook, and at length obliged her to throw it aside.

After dinner, the ladies would visit the objects of my unaffected charity; I accompanied them; but I shall spare you the unentertaining narrative of this second scene of gratitude. My anxious heart, panting with the delightful remembrance of what had passed, made me hasten our return to the castle. On the road, my lovely Presidente, more

pensive than usual, spoke not a word; and I, entirely absorbed in the means of employing the events of the day to advantage, was also silent. Madame de Rosemonde alone spoke, and could receive but few and short answers. We must have tired her out, which was my design, and it succeeded to my wish. When we alighted, she retired to her apartment, and left my fair one and me tête-a-tête in a saloon, poorly lighted: gentle darkness, thou encourager of timid love!

I had not much trouble to direct our conversation to my object. The fervour of my lovely preacher was more useful than my own skill. "When the "heart is so inclined to good," said she, glancing a most enchanting look, "how is it possible it should at the "same time be prone to vice?" "I "don't deserve," replied I, "either "this praise or censure; and I can't

"conceive how, with so much good "sense as you possess, you have not "yet discovered my character. Were "my candour even to hurt me in "your opinion, you are still too de-"serving to with-hold my confidence "from you. You'll find all my errors "proceed from an unfortunate easi-"ness of disposition. Surrounded by "profligates, I contracted their vices; "I have, perhaps, even had a vanity "in excelling them. Here too the "sport of example, impelled by the "model of your virtues, and without "hope of ever attaining them, I have "however endeavoured to follow you: "and, perhaps, the act you value so "highly to-day would lose its merit, "if you knew the motive!" (You see, my charming friend, how nearly I approached to the truth.) "It is "not to me those unfortunate people "are obliged, for the relief they have

"experienced. Where you imagined "you saw a laudable act, I only "sought the means to please. I was "only, if I must so say, the feeble "agent of the divinity I adore!" (Here she would have interrupted me, but I did not give her time.) "Even "at this instant," added I, "it is "weakness alone extracts this secret "from me. I had resolved not to ac-"quaint you of it; I had placed my "happiness in paying to your virtues, "as well as your charms, a pure and "undiscoverable homage. But, in-"capable of deceit, with such an ex-"ample of candour before me, I will "not have to reproach myself with "any vile dissimulation. Imagine not "that I dare offend you by a criminal "presumption. I know I shall be "miserable; but I shall cherish my "sufferings: they are the proofs of the "ardour of my love;—at your feet,

"in your bosom, I will deposit my "grievances; there will I gather "strength to bear up against new suf-"ferings; there I shall meet compas-"sion, mixed with goodness and con-"solation; for I know you'll pity me. "O thou whom I adore! hear me, "pity me, help me." All this time was I on my knees, squeezing her hands in mine; but she, disengaging them suddenly, and covering her eyes with them, exclaimed, "What a miser-"able wretch am I!" and burst into tears. Luckily I had worked myself up to such a degree that I wept also; and taking her hands again, I bathed them with my tears. This precaution was very necessary; for she was so much engaged with her own anguish, that she would not have taken notice of mine, if I had not discovered this expedient to impress her with it. This also gave me leisure to contem-

plate her charming form—her attractions received additional embellishment from her tears. "My imagination began to be fired, and I was so overpowered, that I was tempted to seize the opportunity!"

How weak we are, how much governed by circumstances! since I myself, forgetful of my ultimate design, risked losing, by an untimely triumph, the charms of a long conflict, and the pleasing struggles that precede a difficult defeat; and hurried away by an impetuosity excusable only in a raw youth, was near reducing Madame de Tourvel's conqueror to the paltry triumph of one woman more on his list. My purpose is, that she should yield, yet combat; that without having sufficient force to conquer, she should have enough to make a resistance; let her feel her weakness, and be compelled to own her defeat. The

sorry poacher takes aim at the game he has surprised—the true huntsman runs it fairly down. Is not this an exalted idea? But perhaps by this time I should have only had the regret of not having followed it, if chance had not seconded my prudence.

A noise of some one coming towards the saloon struck us. Madame de Tourvel started in a fright, took a candle, and went out. There was no opposing her. It was only a servant. When I was certain who it was, I followed her. I had gone but a few steps, when, whether her fears or her discovering me made her quicken her pace, she flung herself into, rather than entered, her apartment, and immediately locked the door. Seeing the key inside, I did not think proper to knock; that would have been giving her an opportunity of too easy resistance. The happy simple thought of

looking through the key-hole struck me, and I beheld this adorable woman bathed in tears, on her knees, praying most fervently. What deity dared she invoke? Is there one so powerful as the god of love? In vain does she now seek for foreign aid; I am henceforward the arbiter of her fate.

Thinking I had done enough for one day, I retired to my apartment, and sat down to write to you. I had hopes of seeing her again at supper; but she sent word she was gone to bed indisposed. Madame de Rosemonde proposed to go to see her in her room; but the arch invalid pretended a headach, that prevented her from seeing any one. You may guess I did not sit up long after supper, and had my headach also. After I withdrew, I wrote her a long letter, complaining of her rigour, and went to bed, resolved to deliver it this morning. I slept badly,

as you perceive by the date of this letter. I rose and read my epistle over again, which does not please me: it expresses more ardour than love, and more chagrin than grief. It must be altered when I return to a sufficient degree of composure.

It is now dawn of day, and I hope the freshness of the morning will bring on a little sleep. I return to bed; and whatever ascendant this woman may have over me, I promise you never to be so much taken up with her, as not to dedicate much of my thoughts to you. Adieu, my lovely friend.

*Aug. 21, 17—, four o'clock in the morning.*

## LETTER XXIV.

### VISCOUNT VALMONT *to the* PRESIDENTE TOURVEL.

FROM mere compassion, Madam, vouchsafe to calm my perturbed soul; deign to inform me what I have to hope or fear. When placed between the extremes of happiness and misery, suspense is a most insupportable torment. Alas! why did I ever speak to you? Why did I not endeavour to resist the dominion of your charms that have taken possession of my imagination? Had I been content with silently adoring you, I should at least have the pleasure that ever attends even secretly harbouring that passion; and this pure sentiment, which was then untroubled

by the poignant reflections that have arisen from my knowledge of your sorrow, was enough for my felicity: but the source of my happiness is become that of my despair, since I saw those precious tears; since I heard that cruel exclamation, *Ah! miserable wretch that I am.* Those words, Madam, will for a long time wring my heart. By what fatality happens it, that the softest passion produces only horror to you! Whence proceed these fears? Ah! they do not arise from an inclination of sharing in the passion. Your heart I have much mistaken; it is not made for love: mine, which you incessantly slander, is yet the only one of sensibility; yours is even divested of pity—were it not, you could have afforded a wretched being, who only related his sufferings, one word of consolation; you would not have deprived him of your presence, when his sole

delight is in seeing you; you would not have made a cruel mockery of his disquietude, by acquainting him you were indisposed, without giving him liberty to make any inquiries on the state of your health; you would have known, that a night that brought you twelve hours rest, was to him an age of torment.

Tell me, how have I deserved this afflicting rigour? I am not afraid even to appeal to yourself: what have I done, but yielded to an involuntary sensation, inspired by beauty, and justified by virtue, always kept within due limits by respect, the innocent avowal of which proceeded from hopeless confidence? and will you betray that confidence that you seemed to countenance, and to which I unreservedly gave way? No, I will not believe it; that would be supposing you capable of an injustice, and I

never can entertain, even for a moment, such an idea: I recant my reproaches; I may have been led to write them, but never seriously believed them. Ah, let me believe you all perfection; it is the only satisfaction now left me! Convince me you are so, by extending your generous care to me; of the many you have relieved, is there a wretch wants it so much as I do? Do not abandon me to the distraction you have plunged me into: assist me with your reason, since you have deprived me of mine; and as you have reformed me, complete your work by enlightening me.

I will not deceive you; it will be impossible for you to conquer my love, but you may teach me how to regulate it: by guiding my steps, by prescribing to me my conversation, you will, at least, preserve me from the most

dreadful of all misfortunes, that of incurring your displeasure. Dispel, at least, my desponding fears; tell me you pity and forgive me; promise me your indulgence; you never will afford me that extent of it I wish; but I call for so much of it as is absolutely necessary to me: will you refuse it?

Adieu, Madam! Accept, graciously, the homage of my feelings, to which my respect is inseparably united.

*Aug.* 20, 17—.

## LETTER XXV.

### Viscount Valmont *to the* Marchioness de Merteuil.

I now transmit to you the proceedings of yesterday: at eleven I went to Madame de Rosemonde's, and under her auspices, was introduced to the fair pretended invalid, who was still in bed. Her eyes seemed very heavy; I hope she slept as badly as I did. I seized an opportunity, whilst Madame de Rosemonde was at a distance, to present my letter; it was refused, but I left it on the bed, and very politely approached my old aunt's easy chair, who would be near *her dear child*, to whom it now became necessary to put up the letter to avoid scandal. She indis-

creetly said, she believed she had a little fever. Madame de Rosemonde desired I would feel her pulse, praising, at the same time, my skill in physic: thus my enchantress experienced a double mortification, to be obliged to give me her arm, and to find her little artifice would be detected. I took her by the hand, which I squeezed in one of mine, whilst, with the other, I ran over her smooth delicate arm; the sly being would not answer a single one of my inquiries, which made me say, as I retired, "I could not feel even the "slightest emotion." I suspected her looks would be rather severe; in order to disappoint her, I did not look at her: a little after she said she was desirous to rise, and we left her alone. She appeared at dinner, which was rather gloomy, and informed us she would not go out to walk, which was telling me I should not have an opportunity of

speaking to her. It then became necessary, and I felt this to be the fit place, to fetch a sigh and assume a melancholy look; she undoubtedly expected it, for it was the first time, that day, our eyes met. With all her discretion, she has her little artifices as well as others. I found an opportunity to ask her *if she had decided my fate?* I was not a little astonished to hear her reply, *Yes, Sir, I have wrote to you.* I was very anxious to see this letter; but whether it was design, awkwardness, or timidity, she did not deliver it until night, when she retired to her apartment. I send it you, as also the rough copy of mine; read and give your opinion; observe with what egregious falsity she protests she is not in love, when I am certain of the contrary; and she'll complain, if I deceive her afterwards, and yet is not afraid to deceive me beforehand!—My lovely

friend, the most artful man is barely on a level with the most inexperienced woman. I must, however, give in to all this nonsense, and fatigue myself to death with despair, because Madam is pleased to play a severe character.—How is it possible not to resolve to avenge such indignities,—but patience! Adieu, I have still a great deal to write.

Now I think on't, send me back the inhuman woman's letter; it is possible that hereafter she may expect to find a great value set upon such wretched stuff, and one must be regular.

I say nothing of little Volanges, she shall be our subject the first opportunity.

*Aug.* 22, 17—.

## LETTER XXVI.

### *The* Presidente de Tourvel *to* Viscount Valmont.

You certainly, Sir, would not receive a letter from me, if my foolish conduct, last night, did not put me under the necessity of coming to an explanation. I wept I own; and the words you cite may have escaped me; tears, words, and every thing you have carefully noted; it is then necessary to explain all:

Being accustomed to inspire only becoming sentiments, and habituated only to conversations that I might attend to without a blush, and consequently to possess a degree of confidence, which, I flatter myself, I have

a right to, I am a stranger to dissimulation, and know not how to suppress the sensations which I experience. The astonishment and confusion your behaviour threw me into, an unaccountable dread, from a situation not at all suited to me, and perhaps the shocking thought of seeing myself confounded with the women you despise, and treated with the same levity; all these reasons united, provoked my tears, and may have made me, and I think with reason, say, I was miserable.

This expression, which you think so pointed, would be still certainly too weak, if my tears and words had another motive; if instead of disapproving sentiments that ought to offend me, I had the slightest apprehension of participating them.

No, Sir, I have no such apprehensions; if I had, I should fly a hundred

leagues from you; I would fly to some desert, there to bewail the misfortune of having known you. Notwithstanding my certainty of not having, or ever having, an affection for you, perhaps I should have acted more properly, in following the advice of my friends, in never permitting you to approach me.

I thought, and that is my only error, that you would have had some respect for a woman of character, whose wish was to find you deserve a similar appellation, and to do you justice, and who pleaded in your vindication, whilst you were insulting her by your criminal designs: no, Sir, you do not know me, or you would not thus presume, upon your own injustice, and because you have dared to speak a language I should not have listened to, you would not have thought, yourself, to write me a letter I ought not

to read; and you desire I should *guide your steps, and prescribe your conversation!* Well, Sir, silence and oblivion is the only advice that is suitable for me to give, and you to follow; then, only, will you have a title to pardon: you might even obtain some title to my gratitude—but no, I shall make no request to a man who has lost all respect for me; I will not repose confidence in one who has already abused it. You oblige me to fear, nay, perhaps, to hate you, which was not my wish; I hoped to see in you the nephew of my most respectable friend; I opposed the voice of friendship to that of the public that accused you: you have destroyed all; and I foresee you will not be disposed to regain any thing.

I shall content myself with informing you, Sir, your sentiments offend me; that your declaration of them is

an insult, and far from ever thinking to partake of them, you'll oblige me never to see you more, if you don't observe, on this subject, a silence, which I think I have a right not only to expect, but to require. I enclose you the letter you wrote me, and I hope you will, in the same manner, return me this: I should be extremely mortified that any traces should remain, of an event which ought never to have existed.

I have the honour,

*Aug.* 21, 17—.

## LETTER XXVII.

CECILIA VOLANGES *to the* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL.

How shall I thank you, dear Madam, for your goodness: you judged well that it would be easier for me to write than speak; what I have to tell you is not an easy matter; but you are my friend! Yes, you are my very good friend! And I'll endeavour not to be afraid; and then I have so much occasion for your advice!—I am in great grief; I think every one guesses my thoughts, especially when he is present; I redden up as soon as any one looks at me. Yesterday, when you saw me crying, it was because I wanted to speak to you, and I don't know

what hindered me; when you asked me what ailed me, the tears came into my eyes in spite of me. I could not have spoke a word. If it had not been for you, Mamma would have taken notice of it; and then what would have become of me? This is the way I spend my time for these four days: that day, Madam, I will out with it, on that day Chevalier Danceny wrote to me; I assure you, when I received his letter, I did not know what it was; but to tell the truth, I read it with great pleasure. I would have suffered any thing all my lifetime, rather than he should not have wrote it to me; however, I know very well I must not tell him so; and I can even assure you, that I told him I was very angry; but he says it gets the better of him, and I believe him; for I had resolved not to answer him, and yet I could not

avoid it. I wrote him but once, it was partly even to tell him not to write to me any more; yet he is continually writing; and as I don't answer him, I see plainly he is very melancholy, and that afflicts me greatly: so that I do not know what to do, nor what will become of me: I am much to be pitied!

I beg, Madam, you'll tell me, would there be any great harm in writing an answer to him now and then, only until he can prevail on himself to write me no more, and to be as we used to be before? For myself, if it continues this way, I don't know what I shall do. I assure you, on reading his last letter, I could not forbear crying all the time; and I am very certain, that if I do not answer him again, it will make us both very uneasy.

I will enclose you his letter, or a copy of it, and you'll see he does not

ask any harm. However, if you think it is not proper, I promise you I will not give way to my inclination; but I believe you'll think as I do, that there's no harm in it.

And now that I am upon it, give me leave to put you a question: I have been often told it was very wrong to be in love with any body, but why so? What makes me ask you, is this; the Chevalier Danceny insists there's no harm at all in it, and that almost every body is; if that's the case, I don't know why I should be the only one should be hindered; or is it that it is only wrong for young ladies? For I heard Mamma herself say, that Madam de D—— loved M. M——, and she did not speak as if it was so bad a thing; and yet I am sure she would be very angry with me, if she had the least suspicion of my affection for M. Danceny. She behaves to me always

as if I was a child, and never tells me any thing at all. I thought, when she took me from the convent, I was to be married; but now I think not. It is not that I care much about it, I assure you; but you who are so intimate with her, you, perhaps, know something about it; and if you do, I hope you will tell me.

This is a very long letter, Madam; but since you was so good to give me leave to write to you, I made use of it to tell you every thing, and I depend on your friendship.

I have the honour, &c.

*Paris, Aug.* 23, 17—.

## LETTER XXVIII.

### Chevalier Danceny *to* Cecilia Volanges.

You still, Miss, refuse to answer my letters. Will nothing move you? and must every day banish the hopes it brings! What sort of friendship is it that you consent shall subsist between us? If it is not powerful enough even to make you sensible of my anguish; if you can coolly, and unmoved, look on me, while I suffer, the victim of a flame which I cannot extinguish; if, instead of inspiring you with a confidence in me, my sufferings can hardly move your compassion. — Heavens! your friend suffers, and you will do nothing to assist him. He requests

only one word, and you refuse it him! And you desire him to be satisfied with a sentiment so feeble, that you even dread to repeat it. Yesterday you said you would not be ungrateful. Believe me, Miss, when a person repays love only with friendship, it arises not from a fear of being ungrateful: the fear then is only for the appearance of ingratitude. But I no longer dare converse with you on a subject which must be troublesome to you, as it does not interest you; I must, at all events, confine it within myself, and endeavour to learn to conquer it. I feel the difficulty of the task; I know I must call forth my utmost exertions: there is one however will wring my heart most, that is, often to repeat, yours is insensible.

I will even endeavour to see you less frequently; and I am already busied in finding out a plausible pretence.

Must I then forego the pleasing circumstance of daily seeing you; I will at least never cease regretting it. Perpetual anguish is to be the reward of the tenderest affection; and by your desire, and your decree, I am conscious I never shall again find the happiness I lose this day. You alone were formed for my heart. With what pleasure shall I not take the oath to live only for you! But you will not receive it. Your silence sufficiently informs me that your heart suggests nothing to you in my favour; that is at once the most certain proof of your indifference, and the most cruel manner of communicating it. Farewel, Miss.

I no longer dare flatter myself with receiving an answer; love would have wrote it with eagerness, friendship with pleasure, and even pity with compla-

cency; but pity, friendship, and love, are equally strangers to your heart.

*Paris, Aug. 23, 17—.*

---

## LETTER XXIX.

### Cecilia Volanges *to* Sophia Carnay.

It is certain, Sophy, that I told you, one might in some cases write to an admirer; and I assure you, I am very angry with myself for having followed your advice, which has been the cause of so much uneasiness to the Chevalier Danceny and me; and what proves I was right, is, that Madame de Merteuil, who is a woman that ought to know those things perfectly, has at

length come to think as I do. I owned every thing to her: at first she thought as you did; but when I had explained every thing to her, she was sensible it was a different case: she requires only that I should shew her all my letters, and those of Chevalier Danceny, to be certain I should say nothing but what I ought; so now I am pretty easy. Lord! how I do love Madame de Merteuil; she is a good woman, and a very respectable one; so that her advice may be safely followed. Oh! how I shall write to M. Danceny, and how well satisfied he'll be; he will be more so than he thinks; for, till now, I only mentioned friendship to him, and he wanted me always to call it love. I believe it was pretty much the same; but I was afraid—that was the fact. I told Madame de Merteuil of it; she told me I was in the right; and that an avowal of love ought only to be made

when one could no longer help it: now I'm sure I cannot help it much longer; after all, it is all one, and it will please him most.

Madame de Merteuil told me also, that she would lend me some books, which treat that subject very fully, and would teach me how to conduct myself, and also to write better than I do: for she tells me all my faults, and that is a proof she loves me; she charged me only to say nothing to Mamma of those books, because it would look as if she had neglected my education, and that might displease her. I will engage I shall say nothing of it.

It is, however, very extraordinary, that a woman, who is but a very distant relation, should take more care of me than my mother! I am very happy to be acquainted with her.

She has asked my Mamma leave to take me to the opera, to her own box,

the day after to-morrow; she told me we should be by ourselves, and would chat all the while, without danger of being overheard.—I like that a great deal better than the opera. My marriage will be, in part, the subject of our conversation, I hope; for she told me it was very certain I was to be married; but we had not an opportunity to say any more. Is it not very strange Mamma says nothing at all to me about it.

Adieu, my dear Sophy; I am going to write to Chevalier Danceny. I am quite happy.

*Aug.* 24, 17--.

## LETTER XXX.

### Cecilia Volanges *to the* Chevalier Danceny.

At last, Sir, I consent to write to you, to assure you of my friendship, of my *love* even, since without that you must be unhappy. You say I have not a tender heart: I assure you you are much mistaken; and I hope you now doubt it no longer. If you were uneasy because I did not write to you, do you think it did not give me a great deal of concern too? The reason was, I would not, for all the world, do any thing that was wrong; and I should not even have owned my affection for you, if I could have helped it; but

your grief gave me too much uneasiness. I hope now you will be so no longer, and that we shall be very happy.

I expect to have the pleasure of seeing you this evening, and that you will come early; it will not be as much so as I wish. Mamma sups at home, and I believe she will ask you to stay. I hope you will not be engaged, as you was the day before yesterday. Surely the company you went to sup with must have been very pleasing, for you went very soon; but let us talk no more of that. Now that you know I love you, I hope you will be with me as often as you can; for I am never pleased but when with you; and I wish, with all my heart, you were the same.

I am very sorry you should still be melancholy; but it is not my fault. I shall desire to play on the harpsichord as soon as you come, that you may

have my letter immediately. I think that is the best thing I can do.

Farewel, Sir; I love you with all my heart; the oftener I tell you so, the more happy I feel. I hope you will be so too.

*Aug. 24, 17—.*

---

## LETTER XXXI.

### Chevalier Danceny *to* Cecilia Volanges.

Yes, certainly, we shall be very happy. My happiness is secure, since I am beloved by you. Yours will never end, if it lasts as long as my love. And do you love me, and no longer dread telling me so? *The oftener you tell me so, the more happy you feel.* After

having read the enchanting *I love you;* wrote with your hand, I heard your lovely mouth repeat the avowal. I figured to me those charming eyes, rendered still more so by the expression of tenderness fixed on me. I have received your vows to live for me alone. Oh receive mine, to devote my life to your happiness, and be assured I never will deceive you!

What a happy day was yesterday! Why has not Madame de Merteuil always secrets to impart to your Mamma? Why must the idea of the restraint that attends us, be mixed with the delicious remembrance that fills my soul? Why can't I for ever squeeze that lovely hand, that wrote *I love you,* imprint it with my kisses, and be thus revenged for your refusal of a greater favour?

Tell me, then, my Cecilia, when your Mamma came back, when, by

her presence, we were constrained to behave with indifference to each other, when you could no longer console me by assurances of love, for the refusal of proof, did not you feel some sorrow? did not you say to yourself, one kiss would have made him completely happy, and refused it? Promise me, my lovely charmer, that you'll be not so rigorous the first opportunity. Such a promise will enable me to bear up against the disappointments that I foresee are preparing for us, and the crosses I shall meet, will at least be softened by the certainty that you share them.

Adieu, my adorable Cecilia! The hour is come that I am to be with you. It would be impossible for me to leave off, if it was not to go to you. Adieu, once more, my dearest love!

*Aug*. 25, 17—.

## LETTER XXXII.

### MADAME DE VOLANGES *to the* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL.

YOU wish then, Madam, that I should form a good opinion of the virtue of Monsieur de Valmont? I own I cannot bring myself to it; and that I should have as much difficulty to think so from the simple fact you relate, as to believe a man of acknowledged worth to be vicious for the commission of one fault. Human nature is not perfect in any shape, neither in good nor evil. The profligate wretch has his virtues as well as the virtuous man his weaknesses. This truth is so much the more necessary to be believed, be-

cause, from thence arises the necessity of indulgence for the wicked as well as the good; and that it preserves these from pride, and those from being discouraged. You will, without doubt, think that I don't now practise the doctrine I speak; but it appears to me a most dangerous weakness, to put the man of virtue and the profligate on an equality.

I will not take upon me to scrutinize the motives of Mr. Valmont's action; I'll even think it in itself laudable; but nevertheless, has he not, all his life, been employed in spreading trouble, dishonour, and scandal in families? Listen, if you will, to the voice of the unhappy people he has relieved: but let not that prevent you from attending to the cries of a hundred victims that he has sacrificed. If, as you say, he was only one example of the danger of connections, would he be the less a

dangerous connection? You suppose him capable of a happy reformation: let us go farther, suppose this miracle completed; would not the public opinion be still against him, and ought not that to be sufficient to regulate your conduct? God alone can absolve at the moment of repentance; he is the searcher of hearts; but men can judge only by actions; and no one, after having lost the esteem of the world, has a right to complain of diffidence, which makes this loss so difficult to be repaired. I would have you think above all, my dear young friend, that to lose this esteem, it is sometimes enough to seem to set little value upon it, and do not tax this severity with injustice; for as the world has a right to think that no one renounces this precious jewel, who has good pretensions to it, whoever is not restrained by this consideration, is on the brink of danger. Such, how-

ever, would be the aspect, an intimate connection with Mr. de Valmont would carry with it, were it ever so innocent.

Alarmed with the warmth with which you defend him, I hasten to anticipate the objections I foresee you'll make. You'll quote Madame de Merteuil, whose connection with him has escaped censure; you'll perhaps ask me why I admit him to my house? You will tell me, that far from being rejected by the worthy part of society, he is admitted, even sought for, by what is called good company: I can, I believe, answer to all.

Madame de Merteuil, who is really a very valuable woman, has, perhaps, no other defect but that of too much confidence in her own strength; she is a dexterous guide, who delights in driving her chariot between rocks and precipices, in which her success alone justfiies her: it is right to praise her,

but it would be imprudent to follow her; she herself is convinced, and condemns herself for it, and as she grows in experience, her conduct is more reserved; and I can confidently assure you, we are both of the same opinion.

As to what relates to myself, I will not excuse it more than in others; I admit Mr. de Valmont: without doubt he is received every where; that is an inconsequence to be added to the many others that govern society. You know as well as me, that we spend our lives in remarking, complaining, and giving ourselves up to them. Mr. de Valmont, with a pompous title, a great fortune, many amiable qualities, saw early, that to gain an ascendant in society, it was sufficient to know how to manage with equal address, praise, and ridicule. No one, like him, possesses this double talent; with the one he seduces, with the other he makes him-

self dreaded: he is not esteemed, but flattered. Such is his existence in the midst of a world, that, more prudent than bold, would rather keep on good terms with him than combat him.

But neither Madame de Merteuil nor any other woman would venture to shut herself up in the country, almost tête-a-tête, with such a man. It was reserved for the most discreet, and the most virtuous among them, to set an example of such an inconsequence; pardon the expression, it slipped from me through friendship. My charming friend, even your virtue betrays you, by the security it inspires you with. Think, then, on the one hand, that you will have for judges frivolous people, who will not believe in a virtue, the model of which they cannot find among themselves; and on the other, profligates, who will feign not to believe in it to punish you. Consider you are now

doing what many men would be afraid to risk; for among the young men of fashion, to whom Mr. de Valmont is now become the oracle, the most prudent seem to dread appearing too intimately connected with him; and you are under no apprehensions; ah, return, I conjure you! If my reasons are not sufficient to persuade you, at least give way to my friendship; it is it that makes me renew my instances, it is it must justify them. You will think it severe, and I wish it may be useless; but I would much rather you should have reason to complain of its solicitude, than its negligence.

*Aug.* 24, 17—.

## LETTER XXXIII.

*The* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL *to the* VISCOUNT DE VALMONT.

Now that you dread succeeding, my dear Viscount, now that your scheme is to furnish arms against yourself, and that you wish more to fight than conquer, I have nothing more to say. Your conduct is certainly a masterpiece of prudence; in a contrary supposition, it would be the highest act of folly; and to tell you my sentiments freely, I fear your project is entirely chimerical.

I do not reproach you for having let slip the opportunity; for I really cannot see that you had it in your power; and I know well, whatever

others may say, that an opportunity lost may be found again, and that a rash step is irrecoverable.

But I admire your wisdom in commencing a correspondence, and I defy you to foresee how it will end. You perhaps hope to prove to this woman, that she should give herself up? And that seems to me a truth of opinion, more than of demonstration; and that to make it be relished, you soften, and not argue; but what purpose would it answer to soften by letter, since you would not be on the spot to benefit by it? If all your fine phrases should even produce the intoxication of love, do you flatter yourself that it would be of so long a duration that reflection would not come time enough to prevent its consequences? Think, then, how much it will take to write a letter, and how much before it can be delivered; and then consider if a woman, of the

principles of your devotee, can think so long on what she endeavours never at all to think of: this proceeding may do very well with children, who while they write, I love you, do not know they say I give myself up to you; but Madame de Tourvel's reasoning virtue makes her know the value of the terms. This appears very plain; for notwithstanding the advantage you had over her in your conversation, she foils you in her letter; and what will be the consequence? That by long debating, you will not bring to compliance; that by dint of searching for good reasons, she will find them, will give them, and stick to them; not so much because they are good in themselves, as not to act inconsistently.

Moreover, a remark I am astonished you have not made, is, that nothing is so difficult in love, as to write what one does not feel. I mean to write

with the appearance of truth; it is not but the same phrases are used; they are not arranged in the same manner; or rather, they are arranged with too much perspicuity, and that is worse.

Read over your letter again; it displays so much regularity that you are discovered in every phrase. I am inclined to think your Presidente is so unfashionable as not to perceive it; but what is that to the purpose? the consequence will be still the same; that is the defect of romance; the author racks his brain, heats his imagination, and the reader is unmoved. Heloise is the only exception I know; and notwithstanding the great talents of the author, from this observation alone, I have ever been of opinion, that the work is grounded in truth; not so in speaking; the custom of conversation gives it an air of tenderness, to which the facility of tears still greatly adds; expressive

desires blend themselves with the languishing look, and, at last, incoherent speeches more readily bring on that turbulence of passion, which is the true eloquence of love; but above all, the presence of the beloved object banishes reflection, and makes us wish to be overcome.

Believe me, my dear Viscount, she does not desire you should write any more; retrieve your error, and wait for the opportunity of speaking to her. This woman has more fortitude than I expected; her defence is good, and were it not for the length of her letter, and the pretence she gives you for a replication in her grateful phrase, she would not at all have betrayed herself.

And what, I think, ought to ascertain your success is, she exhausts all her strength at once; and I foresee she will persist in it, for the defence of

a word, and will have none left for the crisis.

I send you back your two letters, and, if you are prudent, they should be the last till after the happy moment. It is too late to say any thing of the little Volanges, who comes on very well, and gives me great satisfaction. I believe I shall have done before you, which ought to make you very happy. Farewell for to-day!

*Aug.* 24, 17—.

## LETTER XXXIV.

### VISCOUNT VALMONT *to the* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL.

YOU write enchantingly, my charming friend; but why take so much trouble to prove a position which all the world knows, that to make a quick progress in love matters, it is better to speak than write? This, I believe, is the full contents of your letter; and is it not the first elements of the art of seduction? I will only remark, that you make but one exception to this principle, and that there are two: with children, who take this step through timidity, and give themselves up through ignorance, you must add the women of

genius, who are dupes to self-love and vanity, which leads them into the snare. For example; I am very certain that the Countess de B——, who answered, without hesitating, my first letter, had then no more affection for me, than I had for her; and that in this connection she had no other view, than being engaged with a person whom she imagined would do her honour.

However, a lawyer will tell you, that the maxim is not applicable to the question; for you suppose that it is at my option to write or speak, which is not the case. Since the affair of the 29th, my cruel charmer, who keeps on the defensive, has studiously avoided meeting me, a piece of address which totally disconcerts me: so that if it should continue, she will oblige me to think seriously on the means of regaining this advantage; as I most assuredly will not be baffled by her in this manner; even

my letters are the occasion of a little warfare: not satisfied with giving no reply, she even refuses receiving them, and I am under the necessity of a new stratagem for each, which does not always succeed.

You may recollect in what a simple manner I delivered the first; the second was not more difficult. She required I should return her letter; I gave her mine instead of it, without her having the least suspicion. But whether from vexation to have been duped, whether through capriciousness or virtue, for she will oblige me to believe she is virtuous, she has obstinately refused the third. I expect, however, from the embarrassment that this refusal had like to put her in, she will in future be more cautious.

However, I was not much astonished that she would not receive that letter, which I offered her in a very plain

manner—that would have been granting something—and I expect a longer defence. After this effort, which was only an essay by way of trial, I put a cover over my letter, and taking the opportunity when she was at her toilette, when Madame de Rosemonde and her waiting-maid were present, I sent it her by my huntsman, ordering him to tell her that it was the paper she asked me for. I rightly judged that she would dread a scandalous explanation, which a refusal would necessarily have brought on; and indeed she took the letter. My ambassador, who had orders to observe her countenance diligently, and who is a shrewd fellow, perceived only a slight blush, with more embarrassment than anger.

I applauded myself, being very certain that she would either keep this letter, or, if she meant to return it, she must take an opportunity when we were

alone, and then could not avoid a conference. About an hour after, one of her people came into my room, from his mistress, and delivered me a packet, folded in another form than my own, on the cover of which I immediately perceived the long-wished-for characters. I broke the seal with rapture—Behold ! it was my own letter, unsealed, and doubled down.—I suspect she dreaded I was not so scrupulous as she, on the score of scandal, which made her invent this diabolical stratagem. You know me well—I have no occasion to describe the rage this put me into. However, I was obliged to be calm, and to think of other means—and this is the only one I could think of :—

Every morning there is a man sent for the letters from this to the post office, which is about three quarters of a league ; for this purpose a small box, in the shape of a trunk, is made use of ;

the master of the post office keeps one key, and Madame de Rosemonde the other. Every one puts in their letters when they think proper, and they are carried at night to the post office: in the morning the messenger goes back for those that arrive. All the servants, strangers and others, take it in turn. It was not my servant's turn; but he offered to go, on pretence that he had business there.

I wrote my letter. I disguised the superscription in a feigned hand, and counterfeited tolerably, on the cover, the post mark of *Dijon*. I chose this town in a gay humour, as I wished for the same rites as the husband; I also wrote from the same place; and like wise because my fair one had been all day expressing her wish to receive letters from Dijon, I thought it but right to give her that satisfaction.

Those precautions taken, it was a

matter of no difficulty to mix this letter with the others; and I still had it in view to be witness to its reception; for the custom is to assemble together at breakfast, and wait the arrival of the letters before we separate. At length they arrived.

Madame de Rosemonde opened the box. "From Dijon," said she, giving the letter to Madame de Tourvel. "It is not my husband's writing," replied the other, in some confusion, breaking open the seal immediately. The first glance informed her who it came from, and made such a change in her countenance, that Madame de Rosemonde took notice of it, and said, "What ails you?" I immediately drew near, saying, "This letter must be very dreadful indeed!" The timorous devotee did not lift up her eyes, nor speak a syllable; and to conceal her embarrassment, feigned to run over the letter,

which she was scarce able to read. I enjoyed her uneasiness; and wishing to push it a little farther.—" Your easy " air," replied I, " makes me hope " that this letter has been the occasion " of more astonishment than grief." Her anger then overpowered her prudence. " It contains," replied she, " things that offend me much; and that " I am astonished any one would dare " write to me." And " who then can it be?" replied Madame de Rosemonde. " It is not signed," replied the angry fair; " but the letter and its author I " equally despise: and I shall take it " as a favour to say no more about it." So saying, she tore the audacious epistle, put the scraps in her pocket, rose, and went out.

Notwithstanding all this anger, she nevertheless has my letter; and I depend upon her curiosity that she will read it.

The circumstances of this day would lead me too far. I inclose you the rough draft of my two letters, which will acquaint you with every thing. If you wish to know the course of this correspondence, you must accustom yourself to decypher my minutes; for I would not for the world take the trouble of copying them. Adieu, my lovely friend!

*Aug.* 25, 17—.

## LETTER XXXV.

### Viscount Valmont *to the* Presidente de Tourvel.

You must be obeyed, Madam; and I must convince you, that, notwithstanding all the faults you are pleased to think me guilty of, I have yet at least so much delicacy as not to suffer a single reproach to escape my lips, and sufficient resolution to impose on myself the most painful sacrifice. You command me to be silent, and to forget you. Well, I shall constrain my love to be silent, and, if possible, I shall forget the cruel manner in which it has been received. Undoubtedly my wish to please gave me no right to it; and I

must farther acknowledge, that the necessity I was under of having your indulgence, was not a sufficient title to obtain it: but you consider my love as an atrocious affront; you forget that if it is a fault, you are at once both the cause and the apology for it. You forget also, that accustomed as I was to lay open my soul to you, even when that confidence might be detrimental to me, it was no longer possible for me to hide the sentiments with which I was affected; and what is the result of sincerity, you look upon as the effect of arrogance; and in recompence of the most tender, the most respectful, and the most sincere love, you drive me far from you. You even threaten me with your hatred. Where is the man who would not complain to be so treated? But I submit, and suffer all without murmuring. You strike, and I adore! The inconceivable ascen-

dant you have obtained over me, has rendered you sole mistress of my sentiments; and if my love alone disobeys, if you cannot destroy it, it is because it is your own work, not mine.

I ask no return; that I never flattered myself with: I don't even implore that pity which the concern you seem to take for me flattered me with the hope of; but I believe, I own, I have a right to claim your justice.

You inform me, Madam, that some persons have endeavoured to prejudice me in your esteem. If you had given credit to the advice of your friends, you would not have even suffered me to approach you. Those are your terms; who then are those officious friends? Certainly those people of such severe morals, and such rigid virtue, will have no objection to give up their names; they certainly would not take shelter behind the same screen with the vilest

of slanderers; and I shall then be no longer ignorant of their name and their charge. Consider, Madam, I have a right to know both one and the other, since you judge me from their report. A criminal is never condemned without being told his crime, and naming his accusers. I ask no other favour; and I, beforehand, engage to make good my justification, and to compel them to retract.

If I have, perhaps, too much despised the empty clamours of the public, which I set little value on, it is not so with your esteem; and when I consecrate my whole life to merit it, it shall not be ravished from me with impunity. It becomes so much the more precious to me, as I shall, without doubt, owe to it the request you fear to make me, and which, you say, would give me a right to your gratitude. Ah! far from requiring any, I shall think myself highly

indebted to you, if you can assist me with an opportunity of being agreeable to you.

Begin then by doing me more justice, and let me be no longer ignorant of what you wish me to do; if I could guess at it, I would save you the trouble of telling it me. To the pleasure of seeing you, add the happiness of serving you, and I shall extol your indulgence. What then can prevent you; it is not, I hope, the dread of a refusal? That, I feel, I should never be able to pardon you. It is not one not to return you your letter. I wish more than you that it may no longer be necessary to me; but accustomed as I am to believe you so soft a disposition, it is in this letter only that I can find you such as you wish to appear. When I form the vow of endeavouring to make you sensible to my flame, I feel that you would fly a hundred leagues from me, rather

than consent; when your accomplishments justify and augment my passion, it still tells me that it insults you; and when in your presence this passion is my supreme good, I feel that it is my greatest torment. You may now conceive that my greatest happiness would be to return you this fatal letter: to ask it again would give me a kind of authority to believe its contents. After this, I hope you will not doubt of my readiness to return it.

*Aug.* 21, 17—.

## LETTER XXXVI.

### VISCOUNT VALMONT *to the* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL.

*(Post mark from Dijon.)*

YOUR severity, Madam, increases daily; and permit me to say, you seem to dread more being indulgent than unjust. After passing judgment on me without giving me a hearing, you must certainly be sensible it was less difficult not to read my reasons than to answer them. You obstinately refuse to receive my letters; you return them contemptuously; and you force me to use artifice at the very instant that my sole object is to convince you of my integrity. The obligation you lay me under of defending myself, will, I hope, apologize for

the means I am constrained to use. Moreover, as I am convinced, that to be justified in your mind, it will be sufficient that the sincerity of my sentiments should be laid open to you, I thought this innocent stratagem might be forgiven. I will, then, dare hope that you will forgive it; and that you will not be much surprised that love is more industrious to shew itself than indifference is to banish it.

Permit me then, Madam, to lay my heart entirely open to you. It is yours, and it is but right you should know it.

When I arrived at Madame de Rosemonde's, I little imagined the fate that awaited me. I knew not you was here; and I must add with the sincerity that characterises me, had I known it, my repose would not have been disturbed: not but that I should have rendered that homage to your beauty it so justly requires; but being long accustomed

to experience only desires, to surrender only to those where my hopes flattered success, I knew nothing of the torments of love. You was witness to the pressing instances of Madame de Rosemonde, to detain me some time. I had already spent one day with you: at length I acquiesced, or rather thought I acquiesced, to the pleasure so natural and reasonable, of paying a proper regard to so respectable a relation.

The manner of living here undoubtedly differed widely from that I had been accustomed to; yet I perceived no difficulty in conforming to it, and without ever thinking of diving into the cause of so sudden a change, I attributed it solely to that easiness of temper, which, I believe, I have already mentioned to you.

Unfortunately (but why must it be a misfortune?) knowing you more, I soon discovered that that enchanting form,

which alone had raised my admiration, was the smallest of your attractions; your celestial soul astonished and seduced mine; I admired your beauty, but adored your virtue. Without a thought of obtaining you, I was resolved to deserve you; seeing your indulgence for my past follies, I was ambitious to merit your approbation for the future.

I sought it in your conversation, I watched for it in your looks; in those looks which diffused a poison so much more dangerous, as it spread without design, and was received without diffidence.

Then I knew what was love; but far from complaining, resolved to bury it in eternal silence. I gave way without dread or reserve to this most delicious sentiment. Each day augmented its power; and soon the pleasure of seeing you became a necessity. Were you

absent a moment, my heart was oppressed; at the noise of your approach it fluttered with joy. I no longer existed but by you and for you; and yet I call on yourself to witness, if ever in the gaiety of rural amusements, or in the more serious conversations, a word ever escaped from me that could betray the secret of my heart.

At length the day arrived which gave birth to my misfortune; and by an inconceivable fatality, a worthy action gave the signal. Yes, Madam, it was in the midst of the poor wretches I had delivered, that giving way to that precious sensibility that embellishes beauty itself, and enchances virtue, you led a heart astray which was already too much intoxicated by love.

You may, perhaps, recollect, what a gloom spread over me at my return. Alas, I was totally employed in com-

bating a passion which I found was overpowering me!

It was after having exhausted all my strength and reason in this unequal combat, that an accident I could not have foreseen, left us alone; then I own I was overcome. My full heart could neither command my words or tears; but is it then a crime? And if it be one, is it not sufficiently punished by the racking torments to which I am devoted?

Consumed by a hopeless love, I implore your pity, and you return me hate: no other happiness in view but that of gazing on you, my unconscious eyes seek you, and I tremble to meet your looks. In the deplorable state to which you have reduced me, I pass my days in concealing my sorrows, and my nights in cherishing them; whilst you, tranquil and peaceful, only know them by hav-

ing been the cause, and enjoying it; and yet it is you that complain, and I excuse myself.

This is, notwithstanding, a true recital of what you call injuries, which rather deserve to be called misfortunes. A pure and sincere love, a profound respect, and an entire submission, are the sentiments with which you have inspired me. I should not dread to present such homage even to the Divinity. Oh thou, who art one of his most beautiful works, imitate his mercy, think on my cruel torments; above all, think that as you have put me between the supremest felicity and despair, the first word you pronounce will for ever decide my fate!

*Aug.* 23, 17—.

## LETTER XXXVII.

*The* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL *to* MADAME DE VOLANGES.

I SUBMIT, Madam, to the sympathetic voice of friendship. Long accustomed to have a deference to your advice, I am led to believe it always founded in reason. I will even acknowledge that Mr. de Valmont must be exceedingly dangerous indeed, if he can assume the character he puts on here, and be the man you represent him. However, since you require it, I will do all in my power to remove him hence if possible; for it often happens that things, very simple in themselves, become extremely embarrassing through forms.

It appears, however, totally impracticable to make this requisition to his aunt; it would be equally revolting to both. I would not, without great reluctance, even determine to quit this place; for besides the reasons I already wrote you relative to Mr. de Tourvel, if my departure should be contrary to Mr. de Valmont's wishes, as is not impossible, could he not readily follow me to Paris? And his return, of which I should be, or, at least, appear to be, the object, would it not seem much more extraordinary than an accidental meeting in the country, at a lady's who is known to be his relation, and my particular friend?

I have, then, no other resource left but to prevail on him to leave this place. I am aware of the difficulties I have to encounter in such a proposal; yet as he seems to make it a point to convince me, that he is not the unprin-

cipled character he has been represented to me, I hope to succeed. I shall even be glad of an opportunity to be satisfied whether (to use his own words) the truly virtuous females ever had, or ever will have occasion to complain of his conduct. If he goes, as I hope he will, it will certainly be in deference to my request; for I have no manner of doubt of his intention to spend a great part of the autumn here; but if, on the contrary, he should obstinately refuse me, it will be time enough for me to depart, which I promise you I will do.

This I believe, Madam, is all your friendship requires of me: I shall eagerly gratify it, and convince you, that notwithstanding *the warmth* with which I have defended Mr. de Valmont, I am nevertheless disposed not only to hear, but also to follow the advice of my friends.

*From* ——, *Aug.* 25, 17—.

## LETTER XXXVIII.

*The* Marchioness de Merteuil *to* Viscount Valmont.

My dear Viscount, I this moment received your enormous packet. If the date is right, I should have had it twenty-four hours sooner; however, was I to take the time to read it, I should not have any to answer it; therefore, I prefer owning its receipt, and let us chat on other matters. It is not that I have any thing to say relative to myself; for the autumn has left nothing in Paris scarce that bears the human form, and for this month past, my prudence and discretion are truly amazing; any other than my Chevalier would be tired out with my constancy. Having

no other amusement, I divert myself with the little Volanges, who shall be the subject of this epistle.

Do you know you have lost more than you can imagine, in not taking this child under your tuition? She is really delightful; she has neither disposition or motive; you may then guess her conversation is mild and easy. I do not think she will ever shine in the sentimental line; but every thing announces the most lively sensations. Without wit or artifice, she has, notwithstanding, a certain kind of natural duplicity, if one may speak so, which sometimes astonishes me, and will be much more successful, as her figure exhibits the picture of candour and openness. She is naturally very caressing, and she sometimes entertains me: her imagination is surprisingly lively; and she is the more agreeable, as she is totally ignorant, and longs to know every

thing. Sometimes she takes fits of impatience that are truly comic; she laughs, she frets, she cries, and then begs of me to instruct her, with a most seducing innocence. I am almost jealous of whoever that pleasure is reserved for.

I do not know whether I wrote you, that for four or five days past I had the honour to be her confident. You may guess at first I affected an appearance of severity; but when I observe that she imagined I was convinced with her bad reasons, I let them pass current; and she is fully persuaded it is entirely owing to her eloquence: this precaution was necessary, lest I should be exposed. I gave her leave to write and say, *I love*; and the same day, without her having any suspicion, I contrived a tête-a-tête for her with her Danceny. But only think, he is such a fool, he has not yet obtained a single kiss from her. However, the boy makes pretty

verses. Lord, what stupid creatures those wits are ! He is so much so, that he makes me uneasy ; for I am resolved not to have any thing to do with him.

Now is the time you might be very useful to me. You are enough acquainted with Danceny to gain his confidence ; and if he once gave it you, we should go on at a great rate. Make haste with your Presidente, for I am determined Gercourt shall not escape. I spoke to the little thing yesterday about him, and painted him in such colours, that she could not hate him more were she married to him for ten years. However, I gave her a long lesson on conjugal fidelity ; nothing is equal to my severity on this point. By this means I establish my reputation for virtue, which too great a condescension might destroy ; and increase the hatred with which I mean to gratify her hus-

band. And, lastly, I hope, by making her think it is not lawful to indulge in a love matter only during the short time she is unmarried, she will come to a decision more expeditiously to lose no time.

Adieu, Viscount! I shall read your volume at my toilette.

*Aug.* 27, 17—.

---

## LETTER XXXIX.

### CECILIA VOLANGES *to* SOPHIA CARNAY.

MY dear Sophia, I am very melancholy and uneasy. I have wept almost the whole night. Not but that at present I am very happy; but I foresee it will not last long.

I was at the opera last night with Madame de Merteuil; we chatted a good deal of my match; I am not much pleased with the husband she announces to me. She tells me I am to be married next October, to the Count de Gercourt: he is of a noble family, rich, and colonel of the regiment of ———; that is all very well. But, on the other hand, he is old—he is almost six and thirty. Madame de Merteuil says he is morose and ill-tempered; and she dreads much I shall not be happy with him. I even perceived plainly she spoke as if she was certain of it, though she would not speak out, for fear of giving me uneasiness. She dwelt almost the whole evening on the duties of wives to their husbands: she acknowledges Mr. de Gercourt is not at all amiable, and yet, she says, I must love him. She has even told me that when I am married,

I must not love Chevalier Danceny, as if that was in my power! I assure you I shall ever love him; or rather would never be married at all. Let Mr. de Gercourt take the consequence —he is not the man of my choice. He is now in Corsica—a great distance. I wish with all my heart he may stay there these ten years. If I was not afraid of being sent back to the convent, I would tell mamma that he is not agreeable to me; but to do that might be still worse. I don't know how to act. I never loved Mr. de Danceny as much as I do now; and when I think I have only one month more to be as I am, the tears burst into my eyes immediately. I have no consolation but in Madame de Merteuil's friendship; she is so tender hearted, she unites with me in all my sorrows; and then she is so amiable, that when I am in her company, I think no more of

them; besides, she is very useful to me, for she has taught me what little I know; and she is so good natured, I can tell her every thing I think of, without being at all ashamed. When she thinks it not right, she sometimes chides me, but always very gently: whenever that happens I spare no endeavours to appease her. She, at least, I may love as much as I will, and there is no harm in that; which gives me great pleasure. However, we have agreed that I must not appear so fond of her before every one, and especially before mamma, lest she should entertain any suspicion on the score of the Chevalier Danceny. I assure you, if I could always live as I now do, I should think myself very happy. Nothing torments me but this horrid Gercourt! But I shall say no more of him: I find if I did, I should be melancholy. I will go write to Chevalier Danceny, and will only talk

to him of my love, and will not touch any subject that may distress him.

Adieu, my dear friend. You now find you are wrong in complaining of my silence; and that notwithstanding *the busy life I lead*, as you call it, I have still time to love and write to you.*

*Aug*. 27, 17—.

* We shall hereafter suppress Cecilia Volanges and Chevalier Danceny's letters, being uninteresting.

## LETTER XL.

*The* Viscount de Valmont *to the* Marchioness de Merteuil.

My inhuman mistress not content with declining an answer to my letters, and even refusing to receive them, she endeavours to deprive me of the pleasure of seeing her, and insists I should quit this place. What will surprise you more is, that I have acquiesced in every thing. You will, no doubt, blame me. Yet I thought I should not let slip the opportunity of receiving her commands; being, on the one hand, convinced, that whosoever commands is responsible, and on the other, that the imaginary air of authority we give the women, is the most difficult snare

for them to escape: besides, the precautions she has taken not to be with me alone, put me in a very dangerous situation, which I thought it prudent to be extricated from at all events: for being incessantly with her, without being able to direct her attention to the subject of love, it was the more to be dreaded she would become accustomed to see me with indifference—a disposition of mind which you very well know is seldom overcome.

You may judge I did not acquiesce without making conditions. I even took care to stipulate for one impossible to be performed; not only that I may be at liberty to keep or break my word, but engage in a discussion, either verbally or in writing, whenever my fair one might be more satisfied with me, or feel the necessity of relaxing. I should have ill managed indeed, if I did not obtain an equivalent for giving

up my pretensions, though they are not of a justifiable nature.

Having laid before you my reasons in this long exordium, I begin the history of the two last days. I shall annex, as proofs, my fair one's letter with my answer. You will agree with me few historians are more exact than I am.

You may recollect the effect my letter from Dijon had the day before yesterday. The remainder of that day was rather tempestuous. The pretty prude did not make her appearance until dinner was on the table, and informed us she had got a bad head-ach; a pretence for concealing the most violent ill humour that ever possessed woman. Her countenance was totally altered; the enchanting softness of her tone was changed to a moroseness that added new beauty to her. I shall make a good use of this discovery in future;

and convert the tender mistress into the passionate one.

I foresaw the evening would be dull; to avoid which, I pretended to have letters to write, and retired to my apartment. I returned about six to the Saloon; Madame de Rosemonde proposed an airing, which was agreed to. But the instant the carriage was ready, the pretended sick lady, by an act of infernal malice, pretended, in her turn, or, perhaps to be revenged of me for my absence, feigned her head-ach much worse, and forced me to undergo a tête-à-tête with my old aunt. I don't know whether my imprecation against this female demon had their effect; but she was in bed at our return.

Next morning, at breakfast, she was no more the same woman: her natural sweetness had returned, and I had reason to think my pardon sealed. Break-

fast being over, the lovely woman arose with an easy air, and walked towards the park; I soon followed her, as you may imagine. "Whence arises this in-"clination for a walk?" said I, accosting her. "I have wrote a great deal "this morning," she replied, "and my "head is a little fatigued."—"I am "not so happy," replied I, "as to have "to reproach myself with being the "cause of that fatigue."—"I have "wrote you," said she, "but I hesitate "to deliver my letter:—it contains a "request, and I fear I must not flatter "myself with success."—"I swear if it "be possible."—"Nothing more easy," replied she; "and though perhaps you "ought to grant it from a motive of "justice, I will consent even to obtain-"ing it as a favour." She then delivered me her letter, which I took, as also her hand, which she drew back, without anger, and more confusion than

vivacity. "The heat is more intense "than I imagined," said she; "I must return." In vain did I strive to persuade her to continuc our walk;—she returned to the Castle;—and were it not for the dread of being seen, I would have used other means as well as my eloquence. She returned without uttering a syllable; and I plainly saw this pretended walk had no other object than to deliver me her letter. She retired to her apartment, and I to mine, to read her epistle. I beg you will read that, and my answer, before you go farther.

## LETTER XLI.

### *The* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL *to* VISCOUNT VALMONT.

YOUR behaviour towards me, Sir, has the appearance of your seeking opportunities to give me more reason to complain of your conduct than I hitherto have had. Your obstinacy in teasing me incessantly with a subject that I neither will or ought to attend to; the ill use you have made of my candour, or timidity, to convey your letters to me; but, above all, the indelicate manner you imagined to hand me the last, without having paid the least attention to the consequences of a surprise which might have exposed me, would authorise me to reproach you in terms as

severe as merited: But I am inclined, instead of renewing my complaint, to bury all in oblivion, provided you agree to a request as simple as it is just.

You yourself have told me, Sir, I ought not to apprehend a denial; although, from an inconsistency which is peculiar to you, this phrase was even followed by the only refusal you had in your power to give,* I am still disposed to think you will, on this occasion, keep a promise you so formally and so lately made.

I require, therefore, you would retire from hence, and leave me, as your residence here any longer will expose me to the censure of the public, which is ever ready to paint things in the worst colours, and a public whom you have long habituated to watching such wo men as have admitted you into their society.

* See Letter the 35th.

Though my friends have for some time given me notice of this danger, I did not pay proper attention to it ; I even combated their advice whilst your behaviour to me gave me reason to think you did not confound me with the crowd of women who have reason to lament their acquaintance with you. Now that you treat me in the same manner, and that I can no longer mistake, it is a duty I owe to the public, my friends, and myself, to take the necessary resolution. I might also add, that a denial would avail little, as I am determined, in case of a refusal, to leave this place immediately.

I do not seek to lessen the obligation your complaisance will lay me under; and will not conceal from you, that if you lay me under the necessity of leaving this, you will put me to inconvenience. Convince me then, Sir, as you have often told me, that a woman of

virtue will never have reason to complain of you: shew me, at least, that if you have ill treated such a woman, you are disposed to atone for the injury you have done her.

Did I think my request required any justification in your sight, it would be enough, I think, to tell you the whole conduct of your life makes it necessary; it is not my fault a reformation has not taken place. But I will not recal events that I wish to forget, and which would lead me to pass a severe sentence on you at the time I am offering you an opportunity of deserving my utmost gratitude. Farewel, Sir. Your determination will tell me in what light I am to behold you for life.

Your most humble, &c.

*Aug.* 25, 17—.

## LETTER XLII.

### Viscount de Valmont *to the* Presidente de Tourvel.

Though the conditions you impose on me, Madam, are severe indeed, I shall not refuse to comply; for I perceive it is impossible for me to oppose any of your wishes. As we are agreed on this point, I dare flatter myself that, in return, you will permit me to make some requests, much easier to be granted than yours, and which, notwithstanding, I don't wish to obtain but through a perfect resignation to your will.

The one, which I hope your justice will suggest, is, to name my accusers; I think the injury they have done me

authorises me to demand who they are: the other request, for which I crave your indulgence, is, to permit me sometimes to renew the homage of a passion, which now, more than ever, will deserve your pity.

Reflect, Madam, that I am earnest to obey you, even at the expence of my happiness; I will go farther, notwithstanding my conviction, that you only wish my absence to rid you of the painful sight of the victim of your injustice.

Be ingenuous, Madam; you dread less the public censure, too long used to reverence you, to dare to harbour a disadvantageous opinion of you, than to be made uneasy by the presence of a man, whom it is easier to punish than to blame. You banish me on the same principle that people turn their eyes from the miserable wretches they do not choose to relieve.

And then absence will redouble my

torments; to whom but you can I relate my grievances? From what other person am I to expect that consolation, which will become so necessary in my affliction? Will you, who are the cause, refuse me that consolation?

Be not surprised, neither that before my departure, I should endeavour to justify my sentiments for you, nor that I shall not have the resolution to set out, until I receive the order from your own mouth.

Those reasons oblige me to request a moment's interview. It would be in vain to think that a correspondence by letter would answer the end. Volumes often cannot explain what a quarter of an hour's conversation will do. You will readily find time to grant me this favour; for, notwithstanding my eagerness to obey you, as Madame de Rosemonde is well apprised of my design to spend a part of the autumn with her, I

must, at all events, wait the return of the post, to pretend a letter of business obliging me to return.

Farewel, Madam; never till now did I experience the force of this expression, which recalls to me the idea of my separation from you. If you could conceive how distressingly it affects me, my obedience would find me some favour in your sight. Receive, however, with more indulgence, the homage of the most tender and respectful passion.

*Aug.* 26, 17—.

## *Sequel to the Fortieth Letter.*

### *From the* VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to the* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL.

Now, my lovely friend, let us discuss this affair a little. You readily conceive, that the virtuous, the scrupulous Madame de Tourvel, cannot grant the first of my requests—that of informing me who my accusers are, without a breach of friendship: thus, by promising every thing on that condition, I am not at all committed; and you must be very sensible, that the negative she must give me, will give me a title to all my other objects; so that, by leaving this place, I shall obtain the advantage of a regular correspondence, with her own consent; for I don't set great value

upon the interview that I ask, by which I mean no more than to accustom her beforehand not to refuse other personal applications to her, when I shall have real occasion for them.

The only thing that remains to be done before my departure is, to know who are those that take the trouble to prejudice me in her opinion.

I presume it is that pedantic scoundrel her husband; I wish it may; for, as a conjugal prohibition is a spur to desire, I should be certain that from the moment of gaining her consent to write to me, I should have nothing more to fear from the husband, because she would then find herself under the necessity of deceiving him.

And if she has a confidential friend, and that friend should be against me, I think it will be necessary to raise a cause of misunderstanding between them, in which I hope to succeed: but,

in the first place, I must see my way clear.

I imagined yesterday I had attained that necessary preliminary; but this woman does not act like any other. We were in her apartment when dinner was announced. She had just time to finish her toilet; and from her hurry, and making apologies, I observed her leave the key in her bureau; and she always leaves the key in her chamber door. My mind was full of this during dinner. When I heard her waiting-maid coming down stairs, I instantly feigned a bleeding at the nose, and went out. I flew to the bureau, found all the drawers open, but not a single paper; yet there is no occasion to burn them, situated as she is. What can she do with the letters she receives? and she receives a great many. I left nothing unexamined; all was open, and I searched every where; so that I am convinced

this precious deposit is confided only to her pocket.

How they are to be got at, my mind has been fruitlessly employed ever since yesterday in contriving means: I cannot conquer my inclination to gain possession of them. I often regret that I have not the talent of a pickpocket. Don't you think it ought to be made a part of the education of a man of intrigue? Would it not be humorous enough to steal a letter or a portrait of a rival, or to extract from the pocket of a prude, materials to unmask her? But our forefathers had no ideas: it is in vain for me to rack my brains; for it only convinces me of my own inability, without furnishing me any remedy.

I returned to dinner very dissatisfied: my fair one however brought me into good humour, by her anxious enquiries on my feigned indisposition: I did not fail to assure her that I had for some

short time, violent agitations, which impaired my health. As she is persuaded the cause proceeded from her, ought she not in conscience endeavour to calm them? Although a devotee, she has very little charity; she refuses any compliance to supplications of love; and this refusal appears to me sufficient to authorise any theft to obtain the object. But adieu; for although I am writing to you, my mind is taken up with those cursed letters.

*Aug.* 27, 17—.

## LETTER XLIII.

*The* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL *to the* VISCOUNT DE VALMONT.

WHY, Sir, do you endeavour at a diminution of my gratitude to you? Why obey me only by halves, and in some measure make a bargain of a simple, genteel act? It is not, then, sufficient that I am sensible of its value! You not only ask a great deal of me, but you demand what it is impossible to grant. If my friends have talked of you to me, they could only do so from regard for me: should they even be mistaken, their intention was not the less good; and yet you require that I should repay this proof of their esteem, by giving you up their names. I must own I have been very

wrong in acquainting you of it; and I now feel it in a very sensible manner. What would have been only candour with any one else, becomes imprudence with you, and would be a crime was I to attend to your request. I appeal to yourself, to your honour; how could you think me capable of such a proceeding? Ought you even to have made me such a proposition? No, certainly; and I am sure, when you reflect, you will desist from this request.

The other you make of writing to me is little easier to grant; and if you will think a moment, you cannot in justice blame me. I do not mean to offend you; but after the character you have required, and which you yourself confess to have partly merited, what woman can avow holding a correspondence with you? And what virtuous woman

could resolve to do that which she would be obliged to conceal?

If I was even certain that your letters would be such as would give me no cause of discontent, and that I could always be conscious I was sufficiently justified in receiving them, then, perhaps, the desire of proving to you that reason, not hatred, guided me, would make me surmount those powerful considerations, and cause me to do what I ought not, in giving you sometimes permission to write to me; and if, indeed, you wish it as much as you express, you will readily submit to the only condition that can possibly make me consent to it: and if you have any gratitude for this condescension, you will not delay your departure a moment.

Give me leave to make one observation on this occasion: you received a letter this morning, and you did not make use of that opportunity to acquaint

Madame de Rosemonde of your intended departure as you promised me; I now hope that nothing will prevent you from keeping your word. I hope much that you will not wait for the interview you ask, which I absolutely will not agree to; and that, instead of the order that you pretend to be so necessary, you will be satisfied with my request, which I again renew to you. Farewel, Sir!

*Aug.* 27, 17 --.

## LETTER XLIV.

### VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to the* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL.

SHARE in my joy, my charming friend; I am loved; I have at length triumphed over that rebellious heart. In vain does she still dissemble; my happy address has discovered the secret. Thanks to my unremitting efforts, I know all that interests me: since last night, that propitious night, I am again myself; I have discovered a double mystery of love and iniquity; I shall enjoy the one, and be revenged of the other; I shall fly from pleasure to pleasure. The bare idea of it transports me almost beyond the bounds of prudence; and yet I shall have occasion for some

of it, to enable me to put any proper order in my narrative; but let us try:

Yesterday, after I had wrote my letter, I received one from the celestial devotee; I send it enclosed; you will observe she with less awkwardness than might be expected, gives me leave to write to her; yet presses my departure, which I well knew I could not defer without prejudice to myself. However, tempted by a curiosity to know who had wrote against me, I was still undetermined how to act. I attempted to bribe her chamber-maid, to induce her to give me her mistress's pockets, which she could easily do at night, and replace them the next morning, without giving the least suspicion. I offered ten louis d'ors for this trifling service; but I found her a hesitating, scrupulous, or timid creature, whom neither my eloquence nor money could bring over. I was using farther soli-

citations, when the bell rung for supper. I was then obliged to break off; and thought myself very happy in obtaining from her a promise to keep my secret, on which, however, you may believe I placed little dependance.

I never was more out of humour. I found I had committed myself, and reproached myself much for the imprudent step I had taken.

After I retired in great anxiety, I spoke to my huntsman, who was entitled, as a successful lover, to some share of credit. I desired he would prevail on this girl to do what I required, or at least to insure secrecy: he, who in general makes no doubt of success in any thing he undertakes, appeared dubious of this negociation, and made a reflection, the depth of which astonished me: "You certainly know better than "I can tell you, Sir," said he, "that to "kiss a girl is nothing more than to in-

"dulge her in a fancy of her own, and "that, there is a wide difference often "between that and making her act ac-"cording to our wishes; and I have so "much less dependance on her, as I "have much reason to think she has "another swain, and that I only owe "my good fortune to her want of occu-"pation in the country; and had it not "been for my zeal for your service, Sir, "I should not have sought it more "than once (this lad is a treasure). As "to the secret," added he, "what pur-"pose will it answer to make her pro-"mise, since she will risk nothing in de-"ceiving us? To speak of it again, would "only make her think it of greater im-"portance, and make her more anxious "to insinuate herself into her mistress's "favour, by divulging it." The just-ness of these reflections added to my embarrassment. Fortunately the fellow was in a talking mood; and as I had

occasion for him, I let him go on: while relating his adventures with this girl, he informed me the room she slept in was only separated from the apartment of her mistress by a single partition, and as the least noise would be heard, they met every night in his room. I instantly formed my plan, which I communicated to him, and we executed it successfully.

I awaited until the clock struck two, and then, as was agreed, went to the rendezvous, with a lighted candle in my hand, and under pretence of having several times in vain rung the bell. My confidant, who plays his part to admiration, performed a little scene of surprise, despair, and confusion, which I put a stop to, by sending him to warm me some water, which I pretended to have occasion for; the scrupulous waiting-maid was the more disconcerted, as the fellow, who had improved on

my scheme, had made her make a toilet very suitable to the heat of the season, but which it by no means apologised for.

Being sensible the more this girl was humbled, the less trouble I should have to bring her to my designs, I did not suffer her to change either her situation or dress; and having ordered my servant to wait for me in my room, I sat by her bed-side, which was in much disorder, and began a conversation. It was necessary to keep the asscendant I had obtained, and I therefore preserved a *sang froid* that would have done honour to the continence of Scipio; and without taking the smallest liberty with her, which her ruddy countenance, and the opportunity, perhaps, gave her a right to hope; I talked to her of business with as much indifference, as I would have done with an attorney.

My conditions were, that I would

would observe the strictest secrecy, provided the day following, at the same hour, she put me in possession of her mistress's pockets, and my offer of ten louis-d'ors. I now confirm I will not take any advantage of your situation. Every thing was granted, as you may believe; I then retired, and left the happy couple to repair their lost time.

I employed mine in sleep: and in the morning, wanting a pretence not to answer my fair one's letter before I had examined her papes, which could not be till the night following, I resolved to go a-hunting, which took up the greasest part of the day.

At my return I was received very coolly. I have reason to believe she was a little piqued at my want of eagerness to make good use of the time that remained, especially after the softer letter which she wrote me. I formed this conjecture, because, on Madame de

Rosemonde's having reproached me on my long absence, the fair one replied with some acrimony, "Oh, let us not "reproach Mr. de Valmont for his "attachment to the only pleasure he "can find here." I complained that they did not do me justice, and took the opportunity to assure them I was so well pleased with their company, that I sacrificed to it a very interesting letter that I had to write; adding, that not having been able to sleep several nights, I endeavoured to try if fatigue would not bring me my usual rest; my looks sufficiently explained the subject of my letter, and the cause of my want of rest. I took care to affect, during the whole evening, a melancholy softness, which succeeded tolerably well, and under which I disguised my impatience for the hour which was to give me up the secret she so obstinately persisted in concealing. At length we retired, and

soon after the faithful waiting-maid brought me the stipulated price of my discretion: when in possession of this treasure, I proceeded with my usual prudence to arranging them; for it was of the utmost importance to replace every thing in order.

I first hit upon two letters from the husband, indigested stuff, a mixture of uninteresting details of law-suits, and unmeaning protestations of conjugal love, which I had the patience to read through; but not a syllable in either concerning me. I put them in their place with some disgust; but that vanished on finding, in my hand-writing, the scraps of my famous letter from Dijon, carefully collected. Fortunately it came into my head to run them over. You may guess the excess of my raptures, when I distinctly perceived the traces of my adorable devotee's tears. I must own I gave way to a

puerile emotion, and kissed this letter with a transport that I did not think myself susceptible of. I continued the happy search; I found all my letters in order according to their dates; and what still surprised me more agreeably was, to find the first of them, that which I thought had been returned to me by my ungrateful fair one, faithfully copied in her own hand-writing, but in an altered and trembling manner, which sufficiently testified the soft agitation of her heart during the time she was employed at it.

So far I was entirely occupied with love; but soon gave way to the greatest rage. Who think you it is that wants to destroy me, with this woman I adore? What fury do you suppose wicked enough to form so diabolical a plan! You know her: it's your friend, your relation; it is Madame de Volanges. You cannot conceive what a string of

horrible stories the infernal Megera has wrote against me. It is she, and she alone, has disturbed the peace of this angelic woman; it is by her counsels, by her pernicious advice, that I find myself obliged to retire; I am sacrificed to her! Certainly her daughter shall be seduced; but that is not sufficient, she shall be ruined; and since the age of this accursed woman shelters her from my blows, I must strike at her in the object of her affections.

She will then force me to return to Paris; she obliges me to it! Be it so; I will return; but she shall have reason to lament my return. I am sorry Danceny is to be the hero of this adventure; he has a fund of honour that will be a restraint upon us; but he is in love, and we are often together: I may turn him to account. My anger overcomes me, and I forget that I am to give you the recital of what has passed to-day.

This morning I saw my lovely prude; she never appeared so charming; that was of course; it is the most powerful moment with a woman, that shall produce an intoxication of soul, which is so often spoke of, and so rarely felt, when, though certain of their affections, we have not yet possessed their favours; which is precisely my case. Perhaps the idea, also, of being deprived of the pleasure of seeing her, served to embellish her. At length the post arrived, and brought me your letter of the 27th; and whilst I was reading it, I hesitated whether I should keep my word or not; but I met my fair one's eyes, and I found it impossible to refuse her any thing.

I therefore announced my departure immediately after Madame de Rosemonde left us: I was four paces distant from the austere lovely one, when she started with a frightened air, "leave me, leave me, Sir, said she; for the love of

"God, leave me!" This fervent prayer, which discovered her emotion, animated me the more; I was now close to her, and took hold of her hands, which she had joined together with the most moving, affecting expressiveness. I then began my tender complaints, when some evil genius brought back Madame de Rosemonde. The timid devotee, who has in reality some reason to be apprehensive, seized the opportunity, and retired.

I notwithstanding offered her my hand, which she accepted; and judging favourably of this kindness, which she had not shown for so long a time, and again renewing my complaints, I endeavoured to squeeze hers. She at first endeavoured to draw it back; but upon a more pressing instance, she gave it up with a good grace, although without either answering this emotion or my

discourse. Being come to the door of her apartment, I wanted to kiss that hand before I left her: she struggled, but an *ah! think I am going to part*, pronounced with great tenderness, made her awkward and defenceless; the kiss was scarcely given, when the hand recovered its strength to escape, and the fair one entered her apartment where the waiting-maid was: here ends my tale.

As I presume you will be to-morrow at the Lady Marechalle's de——, where, certainly, I shall not go to look for you; and as at our first interview we shall have a great many things to talk over, especially that of the little Volanges, which I do not lose sight of; I have determined to send this letter before me; and although it is so long, I will not close it until the moment I am going to send it to the post; for I am so cir-

cumstanced, that a great deal may depend on an opportunity; and I leave you to watch for it.

P. S. Eight o'clock at night.

Nothing new; not the least moment of liberty; even the greatest care employed to avoid it. Yet as much grief as decency would permit, for the least another event, which may not be a matter of indifference, as Madame de Rosemonde has commanded me to give an invitation to Madame de Volanges, to come and spend a few days in the country.

Adieu, my lovely friend, until tomorrow, or the day after at farthest!

*Aug.* 28, 17—

## LETTER XLV.

*The* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL *to* MADAME DE VOLANGES.

MR. de Valmont is gone this morning, Madam: you seemed so anxiously to wish for this event, that I have thought it my duty to impart it to you. Madame de Rosemonde is inconsolable for the loss of her nephew, whose company was really very pleasing: she spent the whole morning in talking to me of him with her usual sensibility; she was inexhaustible in his praise. I thought myself bound to attend to it without interruption; and indeed I must own she was right on many heads; besides, I was sensible I was the cause of this separation, and have no prospect of

making her amends for the pleasure of which I have deprived her. You know I am not naturally inclined to gaiety, and our manner of life here will not contribute much to increase it.

Had I not been following your advice, I should have been inclined to think I had acted too precipitately; for I was really hurt at the grief I had caused my respectable friend; I was so much moved, that I could have mingled my tears with hers.

We now live on the hope that you will accept the invitation that Mr, de Valmont will give you from Madame de Rosemonde, to come and pass a little time with her. I hope you have no doubt of the great satisfaction your compliance will give me; and indeed you should make us amends. I shall be happy in this opportunity of having the pleasure of being sooner acquainted with Mademoiselle de Vo-

langes, and to be near you, to assure you more and more of the respectful sentiments with which I am, &c.

*Aug.* 29, 17—.

---

## LETTER XLVI.

*The* CHEVALIER DANCENY *to* CECILIA VOLANGES.

WHAT then has happened to you, my adorable Cecilia! What can have caused so sudden, so cruel a change in you? What are become of your vows of eternal constancy? Even yesterday you renewed them with so much pleasure: what! can to-day make you forget them? In vain do I examine—I can't find any reason given by myself; and it afflicts me much to have to seek

the cause in you. Ah, no! you are neither fickle or deceitful; and even in this moment of despair, no unworthy suspicion shall disgrace my heart; and yet, from what fatality are you no longer the same? No, cruel creature, you are not! The tender Cecilia, the Cecilia I adore! whose constancy is pledged to me, would not have shunned my tender looks; would not have thwarted the happy accident that placed me near her; or, if any reason that I can't conceive, had forced her treat to me with so much rigour, she would at least have condescended to have informed me of it.

Ah! you don't know, you never can know, what you have made me suffer at this day, what I shall suffer at this instant! Do you then think I can live without your love? Yet, when I begged but a word, a single word, to dispel my fears, instead of making a reply, you feigned a dread of being

overheard; and this obstacle, which then had no existence, you gave birth to by the place you fixed on in the circle. When forced to leave you, and I asked what hour I should see you to-morrow, you feigned not to know; and to Madame de Volanges was I obliged for telling me. Thus the moment hitherto so much panted for, of being with you to-morrow, will bring me only distress and grief; and the pleasure of seeing you, as yet the greatest my heart could experience, must now give way to the dread of being troublesome.

I already feel this: my fears prevent me from talking to you of my passion. Though *I love you,* that enchanting sound, which I so much delighted in repeating, when I could hear it, in my turn; that sweet word which sufficed for my felicity, no longer offers me, if you are altered, but eternal despair. I cannot however think that this talisman

of love has lost all its effect, and I still strive to make use of it. Yes, my Cecilia, *I love you**. Repeat then this happy expression with me. Remember you have accustomed me to it; and now to deprive me of it, would be to condemn me to torments, which, like my love, will only end with my life.

*Aug*. 29, 17—.

---

## LETTER XLVII.

*The* Viscount de Valmont *to the* Marchioness de Merteuil.

I shall not see you to-day, my charm ing friend; and I will give you my rea-

* Those who have not sometimes had occasion to feel the value of a word, of an expression consecrated by love, will not find any sense in this phrase.

sons, which I hope you will accept with your usual good nature.

Instead of returning directly to town yesterday, I stopped at the Countess de ———'s, whose country seat was almost in my road; where I dined, and did not arrive in Paris till near seven o'clock, and alighted at the opera, where I thought you might be.

When the opera was over, I went into the green room to see my old acquaintances; there I found my old friend Emily in the midst of a numerous circle, male and female, who were engaged to sup with her that night at P———. I no sooner came among them, but, by the unanimous voice, I was entreated to be of the party. One, a short, thick figure, who stammered out his invitation in Dutch French, immediately recognised to be the master of the feast. I yielded.

I learned, on our way there, that the

house we were going to was the price agreed on for Emily's condescension to this grotesque figure, and that this supper was in fact a wedding feast. The little man could not contain himself for joy, in expectation of the happiness that awaited him; and I saw him so enraptured with it, that I felt a strong inclination to disturb it; which I effected.

The only difficulty was to bring Emily to consent, in whom the burgomaster's riches had raised some scruples: however, after some solicitation, I brought her at length to consent to my scheme, which was, to fill this little beer hogshead with wine, and thus get rid of him.

The sublime idea we entertained of a drunken Dutchman, made us exert ourselves. We succeeded so well, that by the time the dessert was brought on the table, he was not able

to hold his glass, whilst the tender Emily and I plied him incessantly, till, at length, he fell under the table so drunk, that it must have lasted at least eight days. We then determined to send him back to Paris; and as he had not kept his carriage, I ordered him to be packed into mine, and I remained in his room. I then received the compliments of the company, who retired soon after, and left me master of the field of battle. This frolic, and perhaps my long retirement, made Emily so desirable, that I promised to remain with her until the resurrection of the Dutchman.

This condescension is a return for that she has just had for me, in submitting to serve me as a desk to write to my lovely devotee, to whom it struck me as a pleasant thought, to write in bed with, and almost in the arms of, a girl, where I was interrupted

by a complete infidelity. In this letter I give her an exact account of my conduct and situation. Emily, who read the epistle, laughed immoderately, and I expect it will make you laugh also.

As my letter must be marked at the Paris post-office, I leave it open for you, enclosed. Read it, seal it, and send it there. But, pray, do not use your own seal, nor even any amorous emblem—an antique head only. Adieu, my lovely friend!

P. S. I open my letter to acquaint you, I have determined Emily to go to the Italian opera; and will take that opportunity to visit you. I shall be with you at six the latest; and if agreeable to you, I will accompany you to Madame de Volanges' at seven. It would not be decent to defer longer acquainting her with Madame de Rosemonde's invitation; besides, I shall be glad to see the little Volanges.

Adieu, fair lady! I hope so much pleasure will attend my embracing you, that the Chevalier may be jealous of it.

*From P——, Aug.* 30, 17—.

---

## LETTER XLVIII.

*The* VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to the* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL.

*(Post-mark, Paris.)*

IT is after a very stormy night, during which I have not closed my eyes; it is after having been in incessant agitations, both from uncommon ardour, and entire annihilation of all the faculties of my soul, I come to you, madam, to seek the calm I so much stand in need of, and which I cannot yet hope to enjoy; for the situation I now write

in, convinces me more than ever of the irresistible power of love: I can hardly preserve command over myself, to arrange my ideas in any order; and I already foresee that I shall not be able to finish this letter, without being obliged to break off. What! cannot I then hope that you will one day experience the emotions I do at this moment! I may venture, however, to assert, that if you thoroughly experienced such emotions, you could not be totally insensible to them. Believe me, Madam, settled tranquillity, the sleep of the soul, that image of death, does not lead to happiness; the active passions alone lead the way; and notwithstanding the torments you make me suffer, I may, I think, assure myself, that I am this moment happier than you. In vain do you overwhelm me with your afflicting severities; they do not prevent me from giving a loose

to my love, and forgetting, in the delirium it causes me, the despair to which you abandon me: thus I revenge myself of the exile to which you have condemned me. Never did I before experience so much pleasure in writing to you. Never did I feel in this pleasing employment so sweet, so lively an emotion! Every thing conspires to raise my transports! The very air I breathe wafts me luxurious pleasure; even the table I write on, now, for the first time, consecrated by me to that use, becomes to me a sacred altar of love; how much more lustre will it not hence derive in my eyes! I will have engraven on it my oath ever to love you! Forgive, I beseech you, my disordered senses. I ought, perhaps, to moderate transports you do not share in. I must leave you a moment to dissipate a phrenzy which I find growing upon me: I find it too strong for me.

I return to you, Madam, and certainly return always with the same eagerness; but the sentiment of happiness has fled from me, and gives place to the most cruel state of privation. What does it avail me to talk to you of my sentiments, if it is only in vain that I seek means of convincing you? After so many repeated efforts, my confidence and my strength both abandon me at once. If I recal to my mind the pleasures of love, that only produces a more lively sense of regret at being deprived of them. I see no resource but in your indulgence, and I too well experience at this moment how much I want it, to hope to obtain it. Yet my passion was never more respectful, or ought to give you less offence: it is such, I can venture to say, as the strictest virtue would have no reason to dread; but I am afraid any longer to take up your time

with the pains I experience, certain as I am that the object who causes them, does not share them. I must not, at least, presume too far on goodness, which I should do by dwelling on this melancholy picture; I shall only implore you to give me a reply, and never to doubt the veracity of my sentiments.

*Wrote from P——, dated at Paris, Aug. 30, 17—.*

---

## LETTER XLIX.

CECILIA VOLANGES *to the* CHEVALIER DANCENY.

WITHOUT being either fickle or deceitful, it is sufficient, Sir, to account for my conduct, to know there is a neces-

sity for an alteration in it: I have promised myself a sacrifice to God, until I can offer him also the sacrifice of my sentiments for you, which the religious state you are in renders doubly criminal.—I well know it will give me a great deal of uneasiness, and I will not conceal from you that, since the day before yesterday, I have continually wept when I thought on you; but I hope God will grant me the necessary strength to forget you, which I constantly beg of him night and morning. I even expect, from your friendship and good breeding, that you will not endeavour to interfere with me in the good resolutions that I have been inspired with; and which I endeavour to cherish. I therefore request that you will not write to me any more, as I assure you I shall give no answer; and it would oblige me to acquaint my mamma of every thing that happens,

which would entirely deprive me the pleasure of seeing you.

I shall, notwithstanding, have all the attachment for you, that one can have, consistently with innocence; and from my soul I wish you all manner of happiness. I know very well you will love me no longer, and, perhaps, you will soon love another better than me; but this will be an additional penance for the fault I committed in giving you my heart, which I ought to have reserved for God and my husband, when I shall have one. I hope the divine mercy will pity my weakness, and not afflict me with misfortunes that I shall not be able to bear.

Farewell, Sir! I can assure you, that if it was lawful for me to love any one, I should never love any but you; but that is all I can say, and perhaps more than I ought.

*Aug.* 31, 17—.

## LETTER L.

*The* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL *to the* VISCOUNT DE VALMONT.

Is it thus, then, Sir, you fulfil the conditions on which I consented to receive your letters sometimes? And have I not reason to complain, when you mention a sentiment which I should dread to harbour, even were it not inconsistent with every idea of my duty.

If there was a necessity of fresh arguments to preserve this salutary fear, I think I may find sufficient in your last letter; for really, at the time you think to apologise for your passion, you, on the contrary, convince me of its multiplied horrors, for who would wish to purchase pleasure at the expence of reason? Pleasures so transitory, and

that are always followed by regret, and often by remorse.

Even yourself, in whom the habitude of this dangerous delirium ought to diminish the effect, are notwithstanding obliged to agree, that it often becomes too strong for you, and you are the first to complain of the involuntary disturbance it causes in you. What horrible ravages would it not then make in an unexperienced and sensible heart, which would augment its force by the greatness of the sacrifices it would be obliged to make?

You believe, or feign to believe, Sir, that love leads to happiness; but I am fully persuaded that it would make me so totally miserable, that I wish never to hear the word mentioned. I think that even speaking of it hurts tranquillity; and it is as much from inclination as duty, that I beseech you to be hereafter silent on that subject: this requi-

sition you may very easily grant at this time. You are now returned to Paris, where you will find opportunities enow to forget a sentiment which probably owed its birth to the habit you have of making this your whole employment; and the strength of your present passion, is probably to be ascribed to your want of other objects in the country. Are you not now in that place where you often saw me with indifference? Can you take a step there without meeting an example of your mutability? Are you not there surrounded by women, who, all more amiable than me, have a greater right to your homage? I have not the vanity with which my sex is reproached; I have still less of that false modesty, which is nothing less than a refinement of pride; and it is with sincerity I assure you, that I am not conscious of possessing attractions: had I the greatest, I should not think

them sufficient to fix you. To request of you, then, to think no more of me is only to beg of you to do now what you did before, and what you certainly would do in a very short time, were I even to make a contrary request.

This truth, which I do not lose sight of, would be alone a sufficient reason to listen to you no longer. I have a thousand other reasons; but without entering into long discussion, I shall once more entreat, as I have already done, that you will not write to me more upon a sentiment to which I ought not to listen, much less make any return.

*Sept.* 1, 17—.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

HARDING AND WRIGHT,
PRINTERS,
St. John's Square, London.

# DANGEROUS CONNECTIONS:

A SERIES OF

LETTERS,

SELECTED FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE

OF

A PRIVATE CIRCLE;

AND PUBLISHED FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF SOCIETY.

BY M. C**** DE L***.

---

"I have observed the Manners of the Times, and have wrote those Letters."

J. J. ROUSSEAU, Pref. to the New Eloise.

---

SECOND EDITION.

---

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

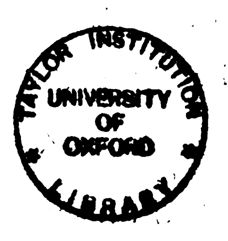
VOL. II.

---

London:

PRINTED FOR J. EBERS, OLD BOND STREET.

1812.




HARDING AND WRIGHT,
PRINTERS,
St. John's Square, London.

# DANGEROUS

# CONNECTIONS.

## LETTER LI.

*The* Marchioness de Merteuil *to* Viscount Valmont.

Upon my word, Viscount, you are intolerable; you treat me with as little ceremony as if I was your mistress. Do you know you will make me angry, and that I am this instant in a most horrible passion? so you are to meet Danceny to-morrow morning? you

know how important it is I should see you before that interview; yet, without giving yourself any farther trouble, you make me wait the whole day, while you run about I know not where. You are the cause of my having been *indecently* late at Madame de Volanges', which all the old women thought *exceedingly strange;* I was under the necessity of amusing them the rest of the evening, to keep them in temper; for one must be on good terms with old women; they decide on the reputation of the young ones.

Now it is one o'clock; and instead of going to bed as I ought, I must sit up to write you a long letter, which will add to my drowsiness by its disagreeable subject. You are very lucky that I have not time to scold you. Do not imagine, however, I forgive you: you have only to thank my hurry. Hear me, then: with a little address,

you may, to-morrow, obtain Danceny's confidence. The opportunity is favourable: it is that of distress. The little girl has been at confession, has told all like a child, and has been since so terrified with the fear of hell, that she is absolutely determined on a rupture. She related to me all her little scruples in a manner that I am confident her head is turned. She shewed me that letter, declaring her breaking off, which is in the true style of fanatical absurdity. She prattled for an hour to me without a word of common sense, and yet she embarrassed me; for you will conceive I could not risk to open my mind to such an ideot.

I observe, however, amidst all this nonsense, that she is not the less in love with her Danceny; I even took notice of one of those resources which love always supplies, and to which the girl is curiously enough a dupe. Torment-

ed with the thoughts of her lover, and the fear of being damned for those thoughts, she has taken it into her head to pray to God to make her forget him; and as she renews this prayer every hour in the day, she is thus incessantly thinking of him.

To any one more *formed* than Danceny, this little circumstance would be more favourable than impropitious; but the youth is such a Celadon, that unless we assist him, it will take him so much time to conquer the slightest obstacles, that we shall not have time enough to carry our project into effect.

You are quite right, it is a pity, and I am as sorry as you that he should be the hero of this adventure; but what can be done? What is past is not to be recalled, and it's all your fault. I desired to see his answer; it was wretched stuff. He gives her numberless reasons to prove that an involuntary

passion is not criminal; as if it became involuntary in the moment of desiring to resist it. This idea is so simple, that it even struck the girl herself. He laments his misfortune in a manner somewhat pathetic; but his grief is so cold, and yet bears the appearance of being so fixed and sincere, I think it impossible that a woman, who has an opportunity of driving a man to despair with so small a risk, should not gratify the whim. He informs her he is not a monk, as the little one imagined; and that is certainly the best part of his letter: for, were a woman absurd enough to be seized with a propensity to monastic love, the gentlemen who are Knights of Malta would not deserve the preference.

However, instead of throwing away time in arguments which would have committed me, and perhaps without persuasion, I approved the scheme of

breaking off; but told her in such cases it was more genteel to declare the reasons in conversation, than write them: that it was also usual to return the letters and other trifles that might have been received; and thus seeming to enter into her views, I determined her to give Danceny a meeting. We immediately concluded the method of bringing it about; and I undertook to prevail upon her mother to go on a visit without her; and to-morrow evening is the decisive hour of our meeting. Danceny is apprised of it. For God's sake, if you possibly can, prevail on this lovely swain to be less languid; and tell him, since he must be told every thing, that the true method of overcoming scruples, is to leave nothing to lose, to those who are subject to scruples: that this ridiculous scene may not be renewed, I did not omit raising doubts in her mind, on the discretion of con-

fessors; and I assure you she repays me the fright she put me into, by her present apprehensions, lest her confessor should tell her mother all. I hope, after I have had one or two more conferences with her on this subject, she will not be so ridiculous to tell her foolish nonsense to the first comer*.

Adieu, Viscount! Seize on Danceny, give him his lesson; it would be shameful we should not do as we pleased with two children. If we meet more difficulty than we first imagined in this business, let us reflect to animate our zeal; you, that your object is Madame de Volanges' daughter;

* The reader must have long since observed, from Madame de Merteuil's manners, that she paid little regard to religion. All this detail would have been suppressed; but it was thought, that to shew effects, it was necessary to touch upon the causes of them.

and I, that she is intended to be Gercourt's bride. Adieu!

*Sept.* 2, 17—.

---

## LETTER LII.

VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to the* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL.

You forbid me, Madam, to talk to you of my love: but where shall I find courage to obey you? Entirely engrossed by a passion, which ought to be of an agreeable nature, and which your obduracy renders so tormenting; languishing in the exile to which you have condemned me; existing only in a state of privation and sorrow, a prey to the most cruel reflections, which incessantly recal to my mind your indif-

ference; must I then lose my only remaining consolation? Can I have any other, than sometimes to bare to you a heart overwhelmed by you with anguish and bitterness? Will you turn aside, not to see the tears you cause to flow? Will you refuse even the acknowledgment of the sacrifices you require? Would it not then be more consonant to your soft tender disposition, to pity a wretch you have made miserable, than to aggravate his sorrows by a prohibition equally unjust and rigorous?

You affect to fear the passion of love, and yet you will not see that you alone cause the evils you reproach to it. Most indubitably it must be a painful sensation when the object that inspires it does not participate in it: but where is happiness to be found, if reciprocal love does not produce it? A tender friendship, a sweet confidence, that

confidence which is the only untinctured with reserve, care softened, pleasure augmented, enchanting hopes, delicious reflections; where are they to be found but in love? You calumniate it, who to share all its blessings have only to cherish it; and I, forgetful of the torments it causes, am only anxious to defend it. You oblige me also to defend myself: for whilst I devote my life to adore you, yours is employed in searching out new faults in me. Already do you suppose me volatile and deceitful; and taking advantage of a few trivial errors which I ingenuously confessed, you are pleased to confound what I then was, with what I now am. Not satisfied with having delivered me up to the torments of living at a distance from you, you add to it a cruel mockery of pleasures to which you have made me too sensible. You neither credit my promises nor

oaths. Well! there is one pledge yet left me to offer, of which you can have no doubt; I mean yourself. I only beg of you to ask yourself with sincerity, if you don't believe I love you sincerely? Whether you have the least doubt of your empire over my heart? Whether you are not even certain of having fixed this, as yet, I must own, too inconstant heart? I will consent to suffer for this error. I shall lament, but shall not appeal. If, on the other hand, and just to us both, you should be obliged to acknowledge, that you now have not, nor ever will have, a rival, do not oblige me to combat chimeras. Leave me, at least, the consolation to believe, you no longer doubt a sentiment which never will, never can end but with my life. Permit me, Madam, to beseech you to answer positively this part of my letter.

Should I even give up that epochs of my life, which, it seems, has hurt me so much in your opinion, it is not that I want reasons to defend it: for, after all, what is my crime? Why, not to be able to resist the torrent in which I was plunged, launched into the world young and inexperienced. Bandied, as it were, from one to another, by a number of women, who all hastened, by their facility, to prevent a reflection that they knew would be unfavourable to them, was it for me to set the example of a resistance that was not opposed to me? Or should I have punished myself for a momentary error, by an useless constancy, which would only have exposed me to ridicule? And what other method but a speedy rupture can justify a shameful choice?

But I can truly say, that this intoxication of the senses, or, perhaps, this delirium of vanity, never reached my

heart. Born, as it were, for love, intrigue could only distract it; but was not sufficient to take possession of it. Surrounded by seducing, but despicable objects, none went to my soul. Pleasures offered, but I sought virtues; and I even thought myself inconstant, because I was delicate, and had feelings.

When I saw you, I began to be enlightened. I soon perceived that the charms of love were attached to the qualities of the soul; that they alone could produce an excess and justification of love. I instantly felt, that it would be as impossible not to love you, as it would be to love any other but you.

Such, Madam, is the heart which you dread to yield to, and whose fate you are to determine: but be it as it will, you will never be able to alter the sentiments that attached it to you;

they are as unalterable as the virtues which gave them birth.

*Sept.* 3, 17—.

---

## LETTER LIII.

VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to the* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL.

I SAW Danceny, and only obtained a half-confidence from him; he is tenacious in concealing the name of the little Volanges, and spoke of her as of a very discreet person, and something inclined to devotion. As to the rest, he related his adventure with tolerable propriety, especially the last event. I heated his imagination as much as I could, and ridiculed his scrupuloms delicacy; but he is still the same, and I cannot depend

upon him: I shall be able to tell you more of him after to-morrow. We go to-morrow to Versailles, and shall endeavour to dive into him by the way.

The interview that was to take place to-day gives me some hopes: perhaps every thing succeeded to our wishes; and perhaps nothing now remains but to extract the confession, and gather the proofs. This business will be easier for you to perform than me, for the little thing is more open, or, which is the same thing, more silly than her discreet lover; notwithstanding, I'll do my best.

Adieu, my lovely friend! I have a great deal of employment on my hands. I will neither see you this night nor to-morrow: but if you come to the knowledge of any thing, let me have a line at my return. I shall certainly sleep in Paris.

*Sept. 3, 17—.*

## LETTER LIV.

### *The* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL *to the* VISCOUNT DE VALMONT.

YES, to be sure, Danceny is a very proper person to get any thing out of. If he has said any thing to you, he is a braggart. I do not know such a fool in love matters, and I reproach myself more and more for the pains we take for him. Do you know, I had like to be exposed on his account, and for no purpose whatever? Oh! I shall be revenged, I assure him.

When I called yesterday on Madame de Volanges, she had altered her mind; she would not go out; she said she was indisposed, and I was forced to make use of all my eloquence to bring her to

a resolution; and the moment was drawing near that Danceny would have arrived before we set out; which would have been so much the more awkward, as Madame de Volanges had told him the evening before, she would not be at home: her daughter and I were upon thorns.

At length we set out; and the little thing squeezed my hand so affectionately, bidding me adieu, that in spite of her project for a rupture, which she was seriously engaged in, I prognosticated wonders from the evening's amusement.

But my uneasiness was not to end thus. We were scarcely half an hour at Madame de ——'s, when Madame de Volanges was really taken ill, and wanted to return home: but I, who was afraid that we should surprise the young people, as there was every reason to dread, took the resolution to

alarm her on the score of her health, which fortunately is not very difficult, and detained her an hour and a half without consenting to bring her back, lest the motion of the carriage should be prejudicial to her. At length we returned at the hour agreed on. By the bashful look I observed at our arrival, I own I thought that, at least, our labour was not lost.

The strong inclination that I had to be satisfied, made me remain with Madame de Volanges, who immediately went to bed; and after having suppedby her bedside, we came away soon, in order to leave her to her repose, and went into her daughter's apartment. She, on her part, did every thing I expected from her; scruples fled, new oaths of constancy, &c. &c. but that blockhead Danceny did not advance a step farther than he was before. One can quarrel with him safely, for the reconciliation would not be

difficult; the little thing, however, says, that he wanted farther advantages, but she knew how to defend herself: I would venture, however, to lay a wager, that she brags, or, at least, excuses him, and I am even almost certain of it. I took it into my head, to know what defence she was capable of making; and from question to question, I warmed her imagination to such a degree—in short, you may believe me, there never was a person more susceptible of a sensitive surprise than she is. This little dear creature is truly amiable; she deserves a better lover; she, at least, shall have a good friend, for I am most sincerely attached to her. I have promised to model her, and I believe I'll keep my word. I have often perceived the want of a female confident, and I would rather have her than any other; but I can't make any thing of her, until she is—what she must be; that is one

more reason for being angry with Danceny.

Farewell, Viscount; do not come to my house to-morrow, unless it be in the morning. I have acquiesced to the pressing invitations of the Chevalier for a night at the villa.

*Sept. 4, 17—.*

---

## LETTER LV.

### Cecilia Volanges *to* Sophia Carnay.

You were in the right, my dear Sophy; thy prophesies are more successful than thy advice. Danceny, as you predicted, has been stronger than my confessor, than you, or even myself; we are just as we were before. I am not sorry for it; and if thou art, and that you scold

me, it is because you are a stranger to the pleasure I have in loving Danceny. It is easy to lay down rules how we should act; but if you had ever experienced the distress we feel for those we love, how we participate in his joys, how difficult it is to say no, when we wish to say yes, you would no longer be astonished: I who have already sensibly felt it, cannot as yet conceive it. Now, can you believe that I can see Danceny cry, without crying myself? That, I assure you, is impossible; and when he is pleased, I am happy; it is in vain to talk about it; what is, must be, and I am sure it is so.

I wish you were in my room;—but that is not what I mean to say; for certainly I would not give place to any one: but I wish you were in love with somebody; it is not only that you should understand me better, but that you should have less reason to find fault;

but also that you should be happier, or, rather, that you should begin to taste of happiness.

Our amusements, our trifles, and all that, is folly; but in love, a word, a look only, is the summit of happiness. When I see Danceny, I wish for nothing more: when he is from me, I wish for nothing but him I cannot account for it: but I imagine that every thing that pleases me, bears a resemblance to him. When he is absent from me, I dream of him; and when I can think of him without being disturbed, that is, when I am alone, I am happy. When I close my eyes, I think I see him; I recal his conversation, and I think I hear him speak; then I sigh—I feel myself agitated in a strange manner—it is a kind of sensation; I don't know what to call it; but it is inexpressibly delightful.

I am apt to think, that when one is

in love, it diffuses itself to our friendship: that I have for thee, has never altered; it is always the same as it was at the convent; but that I experience with Madame de Merteuil, is more like the affection I have for Danceny than that I have for thee; and I sometimes wish she was a man; that is, perhaps, because it is not a childish friendship like ours; or else, that I see them so often together. But this I am sure of, between them both they make me very happy. After all, I don't think there is any great harm in what I do. I wish I was to remain as I am; for there is nothing gives me uneasiness but the thoughts of my marriage. And if Mr. de Gercourt is so disagreeable as he is described to me, which I have no doubt of, I don't know what will become of me. Adieu, my dear Sophy; I love thee most affectionately.

*Sept.* 4, 17—.

## LETTER LVI.

*The* Presidente de Tourvel *to the* Viscount de Valmont.

What purpose would it answer, Sir, to give a reply to your request? For to agree with your opinions would be a stronger motive to beware of them; and without either attacking or defending their sincerity, it is enough for me, and ought to be so for you also, to know, that I neither ought or will answer them.

Let us suppose for a moment, that you may have a sincere affection for me, (and it is only that we may have done with this subject, that I admit this supposition), would the obstacles that separate us be the less insurmounrable;

and ought not my wishes to be still the same, that you should overcome this passion, and every effort of mine employed to assist you, by hastening to deprive you of all manner of hope? You agree that this *idea must hurt, when the object that inspires it does not share it*. You are sufficiently convinced that it is impossible for me to share it; and if even I experienced such a misfortune, I should be the more to be pitied, without adding in the least to your happiness. I hope I have such a share in your esteem, that you will not call what I now say in question. Cease, then, I conjure you, cease to disturb a heart to which tranquillity is so necessary; do not oblige me to regret my acquaintance with you.

Beloved and esteemed by a husband, who I love and respect, my duty and pleasure are united in the same object; I am happy; I ought to be so. If

there are more lively pleasures existing, I wish them not; I will not be acquainted with them. Can any be so pleasing as to be at peace with oneself, to enjoy days of serenity, to sleep without disturbance, and to awake without remorse? What you call happiness, is the tumult of the senses, the storm of passions, the aspect of which is dreadful, even viewing it from the shore; and who then would encounter such storms? Who would dare embark upon a sea spread with thousands and thousands of wrecks, and with whom? No, Sir, I will remain upon land; I cherish the links with which I am attached; I would not break them if I could; and if even I was not bound, I would speedily wear them.

Why do you pursue my steps? Why do you obstinately follow me? Your letters, which were to be but seldom, succeed each other with rapidity;

they were to be discreet, and you entertain me with nothing but your mad passion. You surround me with your ideas, more than you did with your person; put away under one form, you again appear under another. The things I desire you to be silent upon, you say over again in another manner. You take a pleasure in perplexing me, by captious reasons, and you evade mine. I will not reply to you any more:—how you treat the women you have seduced! how contemptibly do you speak of them! I will readily believe some of them deserve it; but are they all then so contemptible? Ah, doubtless they are, since they have relinquished virtue, to give themselves up to a criminal passion; in that moment they lost all, even the esteem of him to whom they sacrificed every thing! This punishment is just; but the idea alone is enough to make one shudder; but what is all this

to me? Why should I trouble myself about you or them; what right have you to disturb my peace? Leave me. See me no more; write me no more, I beseech you; I even require it. This letter shall be the last you will ever receive from me.

*Sept.* 5, 17—.

---

## LETTER LVII.

### Viscount de Valmont *to the* Marchioness de Merteuil.

I received your letter yesterday at my return. Your anger is enchanting. You could not have felt Danceny's errors in a more lively manner, if they had even affected yourself. It is undoubtedly for the sake of revenge, that you accustom his mistress to commit little infidelities: you are a mischievous

creature. How delighful you are! and I am not astonished that one can resist you less than Danceny. At length I have gained the confidence of this hero of romance. He has no longer any secrets with me. I much extolled the supreme happiness attendant on an honourable passion; proved that one such passion was infinitely superior to ten intrigues; and that even I am but a timid lover. He was so pleased with this way of thinking, it being so conformable to his own, and enchanted with my candour, that he poured out his whole soul, and vowed an everlasting friendship without reserve; however, our project is not more advanced.

At first he seemed of opinion, that a young lady should be treated more cautiously than a woman, as having more to lose. He is particularly persuaded, that a man is unjustifiable, who reduces a girl to the necessity of marry-

ing him, or living dishonoured, when the girl is in much more affluent circumstances than the man, as is his present case. The mother's confidence, the daughter's candour; every thing intimidates and restrains him. The difficulty lies not in overruling his arguments, however just. With the assistance of his passion, and a little address, they might soon be overturned, being so open to ridicule, and so opposite to fashion. But the obstacle to this having the effect upon him is, that he thinks himself happy as he is. First amours appear, in general, more honourable, or, as it is called, more chaste, because they are slower, and not, as is imagined, from delicacy or timidity: in those, the heart, astonished by an insensible instinct, stops, as it were, to enjoy the delight it feels; and this powerful delight takes such strong possession of a young mind, as absorbs

it, and renders it callous to every other kind of enjoyment. This axiom is so true, that a libertine when in love, if such a being exists, becomes from that moment less anxious of enjoyment; and to sum up all, between the behaviour of Danceny and the little Volanges, and mine with the prude, Madame de Tourvel, the difference is only in degree. A few well-timed obstacles thrown in the young man's way, might have been serviceable; for obstacles, accompanied with mystery, have a wonderful effect in inspiring boldness. I am apprehensive you have hurt our scheme by being too useful to him; your conduct would have been excellent with an experienced *man*, who had no view beyond desire: but you might have foreseen, that a youth of honourable dispositions, and immersed in love, the greatest value of favours, is to be proof against love; and consequently, the more certain he

might be of being beloved, the less enterprising he would be. What is to do now, I know not; but I am of opinion, the girl cannot be caught before marriage, and that our labour will be lost. I am very sorry for it, but there is no remedy.

Whilst I am writing a dissertation on this business, you are better employed with your Chevalier. That recals to my memory your promise to commit an infidelity in my favour; I have it in writing, and I don't intend it should be waste paper. I will allow, the time of payment is not expired: it would be a generous act in you not to wait the day fixed for discharging it; on my part, I would acknowledge myself your debtor for the interest. What say you, my lovely friend; are not you tired of your constancy? This Chevalier is a wonderful fellow, it seems. But I am determined to compel you to ac-

knowledge, that if you found any merit in him, it arose from your having forgot me.

Adieu, my dear friend! I embrace you as ardently as I desire to possess you. I defy all the Chevalier's embraces to attain to an equal degree of ardour.

*Sept.* 5, 17—.

---

## LETTER LVIII.

VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to the* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL.

How is it I deserved the reproaches you make me, and the indignation you express against me? The most violent, and yet the most respectful attachment, the most absolute submission to your will, is, in a few words, the history of

my conduct and sentiments towards you! Sinking under the weight of an unhappy passion, the only consolation left was to see you; you ordered me to depart, and I obeyed without murmuring. For this sacrifice you permitted me to write to you, and now I am to be deprived of this only satisfaction. But shall I then have it torn from me without a struggle? No, certainly; it is too dear: it is the only one that remains, and I hold it from you.

You say my letters are too frequent. I beg you will reflect, that for these ten days that I have been exiled from you, a single moment has not passed that was not taken up in thinking of you, and yet I have wrote you but two letters. *I entertain you with nothing but my mad passion.* Ah! what can I say but what I think? All I could do, was to soften the expression; and I hope you will believe me when I assure

you, I have only let you see what I could not hide. At length you threaten to answer me no more. And thus the man who prefers you to every thing, and whose respect is still greater than his love, you are not content to treat with the utmost severity, but add to it contempt. But why all those threats and this wrath? What occasion for them, when you are certain to be obeyed, even in your unjust orders? Is it then possible for me to contradict your wishes; and have I not already proved it? But will you abuse your power over me? After having made me miserable, after all your injustice, will it be an easy matter for you to enjoy that tranquillity that you say is so necessary to you? Will you never tell yourself—he made me arbitress of his fate, and I made him miserable; he implored my aid, and I did not even give him a compassionate glance—Do you know how far despair may drive me? No.

To sooth my cares, you should know the extent of my passion, and you do not know my heart.

But to what am I made a sacrifice? To chimerical fears. Who inspired them? The man who adores you; a man over whom you will ever have an absolute sway. What do you dread, what can you dread, from a sentiment that you will always have the power to direct at your pleasure? Your imagination creates monsters, and the fears they raise you attribute to love. With a little confidence those fears will vanish.

A learned writer has said, that in order to dispel one's fears, it would be almost always sufficient to search the cause *. It is to love, above all others, that this truth is applicable. Love and your apprehensions will subside.

* It is imagined Rousseau in his Emily; but the citation is not exact, and the application that Valmont makes is false; and, perhaps, Madame de Tourvel had not read Emily.

In the room of terrifying objects, you will find a tender submissive lover, and a delicious sentiment; your days will be marked with bliss; and the only regret you will have, will be to have lost so much time in indifference. Myself even, since I have abandoned my errors, exist no longer but for love. I regret the time spent in pleasure; and I feel it is from you alone my happiness must proceed. But let me entreat you, that the pleasure I have in writing to you may not be interrupted by the dread of offending. I will not disobey you; but lay myself at your feet, and there reclaim the happiness you want to deprive me of; the only one that is left me. I call on you; hear my prayers, and behold my tears. Ah, Madam! will you refuse me?

*Sept.* 7, 17—.

## LETTER LIX.

### VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to the* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL.

PRAY inform me, if you can, what is all this nonsense of Danceny. What has happened, and what has he lost? His fair one, perhaps, is angry at his constant respect; and really one would be vexed at a smaller matter. What shall I say to him to-night at the rendezvous he requested, and which I have given him at all events. I shall most certainly lose my time to attend his doleful ditty, if it does not lead us to something. Passionate complaints are insupportable only in a recitative obligato, or in grand airs. Give me your directions then about

this business, and what I am to do; otherwise I shall desert, to avoid the dulness I foresee. Could I have a little chat with you this morning? If you are *busy*, at least give me a line, and the catchword for the part I am to act.

Where was you yesterday? I can never now have the pleasure of seeing you. At this rate, it was not worth while to keep me in Paris in the month of September. Take some resolution, however; for I have just received a most pressing invitation from the Countess de B—, to go see her in the country; and she writes very humorously, "that her husband has the finest wood "in the world, which he preserves "carefully for the amusement of his "friends;" and you know I have some kind of right to that wood. I will go see it again, if you have no employment for me. Adieu! Remember

Danceny is to be with me at four o'clock.

*Sept.* 8, 17—.

---

## LETTER LX.

CHEVALIER DANCENY *to the* VISCOUNT DE VALMONT.

(*Inclosed in the preceding.*)

AH, Sir! I am in a state of desperation; all his lost. I dare not confide to paper the cause of my troubles; but want to pour them forth in the bosom of some faithful friend. At what hour can I see you, to seek consolation and advice from you? I was so happy the day I opened my mind to you: now, what an alteration! every thing is adverse to

me. What I suffer upon my own account is the least part of my torments; my uneasiness for a much dearer object is what I cannot support. You, who are happier than me, can see her; and I expect from your friendship that you will not refuse me: but I must speak to you, and give you your instructions. I know you will pity and assist me. In you my hopes are centered. You are sensible; you know what love is, and you are the only one in whom I can confide: do not refuse me your assistance.

Adieu, Sir! the only relief I experience in my sorrow, is to think I have still such a friend as you left. Pray inform me, at what hour I can find you at home; if it is not this morning, I beg it may be early in the afternoon.

*Sept.* 8, 17—.

## LETTER LXI.

### CECILIA VOLANGES *to* SOPHIA CARNAY.

MY dear Sophy, pity thy poor Cecilia; she is very unhappy. Mamma knows all. I cannot conceive how she had any suspicion; and yet she has discovered every thing. Last night mamma appeared to be a little out of temper; but I did not take any notice of it; and whilst she was at cards, I chatted very agreeably with Madame de Merteuil, who supped with us. We had a great deal of talk about Danceny; and yet I believe we were not overheard. She went away, and I retired to my apartment.

I was undressing when mamma came

in, and ordered my waiting maid to retire; she demanded the key of my escrutoire. The tone in which she made this requisition threw me all in a flutter, so that I could scarcely support myself; I made believe I could not find it: but at length I was obliged to obey. The first drawer she opened was the very one where all Chevalier Danceny's letters were. I was so perplexed, that when she asked me what they were, I could give her no other answer, but that it was nothing at all; but when I saw she began to read the first that offered, I had scarce time to fall into a chair, when I fainted. As soon as I recovered, my mother, who had called in the waiting maid, retired, desiring me to go to bed. She carried off all Danceny's letters. I shudder every time I think that I must appear before her again. I have done nothing but cry all night.

It is but just daylight, and I write to you, in hopes that Josephine will come. If I can speak to her alone, I shall beg of her to leave a note, that I shall write, with Madame de Merteuil; and if I cannot, I will put it in your letter, and you will be so good as to send it, as from yourself. It is from her alone that I can receive any consolation. We will, at least, speak of him, for I never hope to see him more. I am very unhappy. She perhaps will be kind enough to deliver a letter to Danceny. I dare not confide in Josephine, and still less in my waiting maid; for it is, perhaps, she that told my mother that I had letters in my desk.

I will not write to you any more now, because I must have time to write to Madame de Merteuil and Danceny, and to have all my letters ready, if she will take charge of them; after that, I will go to bed again, that they may find

me in bed when they come into my room. I will say I am ill, to prevent my being called to mamma. I shall not tell a great lie; for I surely suffer as much as if I had a fever. My eyes are inflamed with crying; and I have a weight at my stomach, which prevents me from breathing. When I think I never shall see Danceny more, I wish I was dead. Farewel, my dear Sophy. I can't write any more; my tears suffocate me.

*Sept.* 7, 17—.

## LETTER LXII.

### Madame de Volanges *to* Chevalier Danceny.

You will certainly not be surprised, Sir, after having so grossly abused the confidence of a mother, and the innocence of a child, to be no longer admitted into a house where you have repaid the sincerest friendship with the blackest ingratitude. I prefer desiring you never more to appear here, rather than giving orders to my servants to refuse you admittance, which would affect us all, by the remarks that would infallibly be made. I have a right to expect you will not put me under the necessity of taking this step. I must also acquaint you, that if you should

hereafter make the least attempt to keep up a correspondence with my daughter, a severe and everlasting confinement shall withdraw her from your solicitations. I leave it then to yourself, Sir, to determine whether you will be the cause of her misery, as you have attempted to be that of her dishonour. As to myself, my resolution is fixed, and she's informed of it.

I send you, inclosed, all your letters; and I expect you will send me back those of my daughter; and that you will concur in leaving no mark of an event, the remembrance of which fills me with indignation; her with shame, as it should you with remorse.

I have the honour, &c.

*Sept.* 7, 17—.

## LETTER LXIII.

MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL *to* VISCOUNT DE VALMONT.

YES, certainly, I can explain Danceny's letter to you. The incident that gave birth to it is my work, and I think it a master-piece. I lost no time since I received your last letter; and, in the words of the Athenian architect, "What he has said, I will perform."

There must be obstacles then for our hero of romance; and his happiness lulls him. Oh! leave that to me, I will cut out work for him; and I am much mistaken if he sleeps so quietly hereafter. It was necessary to make him sensible of his folly; and I flatter myself that he now regrets the oppor-

tunity he has let slip. You say also, that it is necessary there should be a little mystery in the business: well, take my word for it, that shall not be wanting. I have this good quality, that if I am but told my faults, I am not at rest till I amend them. Now to inform you what I have done—at my return the day before yesterday, in the morning I received your letter, which is truly admirable. Being fully satisfied that you had very well pointed out the cause of the disorder, I set about finding the method of cure. But first I lay down; for the indefatigable Chevalier did not suffer me to take the least repose; and I thought I should sleep: but no; totally taken up with the thoughts of rousing Danceny from his lethargy, or punishing him for it, I could not close my eyes; and it was not until after I had well digested my plan, I got two hours repose.

I went that same evening to see Madame de Volanges; and told her, in pursuance of my scheme, in a very confidential manner, I was very certain there subsisted between her daughter and Danceny a dangerous connection. This woman, so penetrating in your business, was blinded to such a degree, that at first she replied, I certainly was mistaken; her daughter was but a child, &c. &c. I could not venture to tell her all I knew: but quoted looks, words, *which much alarmed my friendship and virtue.* I spoke almost as well as a devotee: to give the finishing blow to my intelligence, I told her I thought I saw a letter given and received. That I also recollected she one day opened a drawer in her bureau, in which I observed several papers, which she doubtless carefully preserves. "Do you know any one she corres-"ponds with frequently?" At that

question Madame de Volanges' countenance changed, and I observed some tears drop from her. "I thank you, "my worthy friend," said she, squeezing my hand; "I shall inquire into "it."

After this conversation, which was too short to cause any suspicion, I joined company with the little thing. I left her soon after, to beg of the mother not to discover to her daughter what I had told; which she promised me the more readily, as I observed what a happy thing it was that this child had placed such a confidence in me as to open her heart, which gave me an opportunity of assisting her *with my good advice*. I am the more satisfied that she will keep her promise, as no doubt she will plume herself on her penetration with her daughter. Thus I am authorised to keep up the ton of friend-

ship with the little one, without giving umbrage to Madame de Volanges, which must be avoided. I shall moreover by this means have opportunities of conversing as long and as secretly as I please with the daughter, without alarming the mother.

This I put in practice that same evening; for after my party at cards was ended, I took the young one into a corner, and began upon the subject of Danceny, which never fatigues her; and diverted myself in heating her imagination with the pleasure she would have in seeing him the next day: there is no sort of extravagance but what she came into; it was necessary to pay her in hope, what I took from her in reality; moreover, this will make the blow the more sensible; and am confident that the more she suffers, the more ready she will be to make herself amends at the

first opportunity. We ought to accustom those we intend for great adventures, to great events.

After all, she may afford a few tears, for the pleasure of having her Danceny. She is distracted about him! Well, she shall have him; and perhaps the sooner for this little storm. It is a troublesome dream which will be most delicious at waking; and, take every thing together, I think she ought to be grateful. But to the point: I retired very well satisfied with myself. Either Danceny, said I, animated by obstacles, will redouble his affection, and then I will serve him to the utmost; or, if he is the booby I am sometimes inclined to think him, he will be desperate, and think himself undone: even then, I shall be revenged of him as much as in my power; I shall have increased the mother's esteem for me, the daughter's friendship, and the confidence of both.

As to Gercourt, who is the first object of my care, I shall be very unfortunate, or very awkward indeed, if, having such an ascendant over his wife's mind as I already have, and shall still have more, I did not find means of making him what I wish. I laid down with those pleasing ideas, slept very well, and did not awake till it was late.

In the morning I found two letters, one from the mother, and the other from the daughter; and could not help laughing to find in both literally this phrase, —*"It is from you alone I expect "any consolation."* And indeed it is pleasant enough to console for and against, and to be the sole agent of two interests so directly opposite. Thus I am like the Divinity, receiving the opposite vows of blind mortals, without altering my immutable decrees. However, I have quitted this grand roll, to take on me that of the consoling angel;

and I went, according to the precept, to visit my two friends in their affliction.

I began with the mother, who I found in a very melancholy situation, which partly revenges you, for the obstacles you have experienced from your charming prude. Every thing succeeded wonderfully; my only uneasiness was, lest Madame de Volanges should seize this opportunity of gaining her daughter's confidence, which would have been a very easy matter, if she had used mild and friendly admonitions; and giving to the advice of reason the tone and air of indulgent tenderness. Fortunately she armed herself with severity; and behaved so badly, that nothing was left for me but to applaud. It is true she had like to have overthrown my plan entirely, by the resolution she had taken to shut up her daughter in the convent; but I ward-

ed the blow, and prevailed on her only to threaten it, in case Danceny should continue his pursuit, in order to oblige them both to a circumspection which I think so necessary for my success.

From thence I went to the daughter: you cannot conceive how much grief embellished her: if I can only infuse a little coquetry into her, I will engage she will cry often: but now she wept sincerely.—Struck with this new charm, which I knew not before, and which I was very glad to observe, at first I gave her a few awkward consolations, which rather augment than relieve distress; and by this means led her to almost a state of suffocation. She cried no longer, and I really began to fear she would fall into convulsions. I advised her to go to bed, which she agreed to, and was her waiting maid: she had not dressed her head, her hair all loose

upon her shoulders; her neck quite bare; I embraced her, she fell back in my arms, and her tears flowed again. Ye gods, how lovely she was! If the Magdalen was thus, she was much more dangerous as a penitent, than as a sinner.

When the lovely girl was in bed, I began really to comfort her in good earnest. I dispelled her fears of the convent, and raised her hopes of seeing Danceny privately; and sitting by the bedside, "If he was here now!" said I.—Enlarging on the subject, I led her from thought to fancy, so that she soon forgot her affliction. We should have parted perfectly satisfied with each other, had she not wanted to prevail on me to deliver a letter to Danceny, which I absolutely refused. I dare say my reasons will meet your approbation.

First, it would be running a risk with Danceny; but had that been the

only reason I could have alleged with the girl, there are a great many others I must impart to you. Would it not be risking the fruits of all my labours, to give our young people so easy a method, and so speedily of putting a period to their distress? Moreover, I should not be sorry to oblige them employ a domestic in this adventure; for if it has a happy issue, as I hope it will, she must feel her consequence immediately after marriage; and I know no means so certain of spreading her fame; or if they did not speak, which would be miraculous indeed, we could speak for them, and it would be more convenient the indiscretion should lay with them.

You must then infuse this idea into Danceny to-day; as I cannot depend on the little Volanges' waiting maid, whom she seems diffident of, you may point out my faithful Victoire. I shall take care to ensure success: this idea

pleases me much, as the secret will be useful to us, and not to them; for I am not yet at the end of my story.

Whilst I excused myself from taking her letter, I every moment dreaded she would have mentioned the penny-post, which I scarcely could have refused. Fortunately, through ignorance or distress, or that she was more anxious for the answer than the letter, which she could not have had by the same means, she never mentioned it; but to be guarded against this idea, if it should happen, or at least she should not have an idea of making use of it, I returned to her mother, and induced her to take her daughter to the country for a short time;—and where do you think? Does not your heart leap for joy? Why, to your old aunt's, Madame de Rosemonde. She is to acquaint her of it this day: thus you are authorised to go to your beloved devotee, who can

no longer object to the scandal of a tête-a-tête; and thanks to my industry, Madame de Volanges shall herself repair all the mischief she has done you.

But harkye, I must insist you are not to be so taken up with your own affairs as to neglect this; remember how much I am interested in it. I wish you to be not only the correspondent, but the confidant, of the two young ones; acquaint Danceny, then, of this journey, and make him a tender of your services. Remove every difficulty, but that of delivering your credentials to his fair one; and remove that obstacle, instantly, in pointing out the medium of my chamber-maid. Doubtless he will embrace it, and for your reward you will be the confidant of a young heart, which is ever of consequence. The poor little thing, how she will blush when she gives you her

first letter! I cannot help thinking the character of a confidant, against which so many prejudices are formed, appears to be a tolerable relaxation, when one has other employment upon their hands, which is your case.

The denouement of this intrigue depends entirely upon you. You must watch the moment when you are to reunite your actors. The country offers a thousand opportunities; and Danceny will be ready to fly at your first signal; a night, a disguise, a window;—but if the little thing comes back as she goes, it is your fault; if you think she should want any assistance from me, let me know. I think I have given her a tolerable lesson on the danger of keeping letters, so I may now venture to write to her; and I am still determined to make her my pupil.

I believe I forgot to tell you her

suspicions, in regard to her correspondent, at first fell upon the waiting maid; but I turned them off to the confessor; that is killing two birds with one stone.

Adieu, Viscount! This letter has taken me a long time, and my dinner has been put back; but friendship and self-love dictated it.

You will receive it at three, that will be time enough.

Complain of me now if you dare; and go, if you are inclined, to the Comte de B——'s wood: you say he keeps it for the amusement of his friends; that man is the friend of the world; but adieu! I am hungry.

*Sept.* 9, 17—.

## LETTER LXIV.

### *The* CHEVALIER DANCENY *to* MADAME DE VOLANGES.

(*Annexed to the 66th Letter, from the Viscount to the Marchioness.*)

WITHOUT seeking, Madam, to justify my conduct, and without the least cause of complaint of yours, I can only lament the unhappiness of three persons all worthy of a better fate. I beg leave to assure you, my chagrin, on this occasion, proceeds more from being the cause than the victim. Since yesterday, I have often endeavoured to do myself the honour of answering your letter, without being able to perform my resolution; yet I have so many

things to say, that I must overcome every other consideration; and if this letter is incoherent, you may very well imagine that I stand in great need of your indulgence in my present painful situation.

Permit me, therefore, Madam, to demur against the first position of your letter. I venture to assure you, I have neither abused your confidence, nor Mademoiselle de Volanges' innocence: I have paid a proper respect to one and the other, they alone depend on me; and were you to make me responsible for an involuntary sentiment, I shall not be afraid to declare, that the one Mademoiselle your daughter inspired me with, may perhaps displease, but ought by no means to offend you. This motive, which I feel more than I can express, I leave you and my letters to determine on.

You forbid me to come to your

house in future, and I most certainly will submit to your pleasure on this occasion; but give me leave to remonstrate, that such an abrupt absence will give as much cause to remarks you wish to avoid, as the orders you have declined giving, for the same reason, would create; and I think this consideration more important on Mademoiselle de Volanges' account than my own. I therefore beseech you to weigh attentively those things, and not suffer your severity to get the better of your prudence. I am confident that the interest of your daughter alone will govern your resolutions; I shall therefore wait your farther commands.

Yet, if you should think proper to permit me to wait upon you sometimes, I engage myself, Madam, (and you may depend upon my promise), I shall not attempt to abuse your condescension, by presuming to speak in private

to Mademoiselle de Volanges, or convey any letter to her. The dread of doing any thing that might affect her reputation, influences me to this sacrifice; and the happiness of some time seeing her would be a sufficient recompence.

This part of my letter is the only answer I can make to the fate you intend for Mademoiselle de Volanges, and which you mean to be dependent on my conduct. It would be deceiving you to promise more. A vile seducer may make his projects subservient to circumstances, and calculate them to events; but the passion with which I am inspired admits of only two sentiments, courage and constancy.

What me, Madam! me consent to be forgotten by Mademoiselle de Volanges, and I to forget her? No, never! I will be constant to her; she has received my vows, and I now again re-

new them. Forgive me, Madam, I am going astray; I must resume my reason.

One thing more remains to be mentioned, in reply to the letters you require. I am really unhappy to be obliged to add a refusal to the wrongs you already charge me with: but I beseech you to attend to my reasons, and vouchsafe to remember to enhance their value: that the only consolation I have left for the loss of your friendship, is the hope of preserving your esteem.

Mademoiselle de Volanges' letters, ever precious to me, become more so at this moment. They are my only felicity; they bring back to my remembrance the only charm of my life! Yet, I beg you will believe me, I would not hesitate a moment to sacrifice them to you; and the regret of being deprived of them, would give way to my strong

desire of proving my most respectful obedience to your orders; but very powerful considerations, which I am confident you yourself will not blame, prevent me.

It is true you have got the secret from Mademoiselle de Volanges; but permit me to say, and I believe I am authorised, that it is the effect of surprise, and not of confidence. I do not pretend to blame the step you have taken, which may be sanctioned by your maternal care. I respect your right; but that will not dispense me from doing my duty. The most sacred of all, I conceive, is, not to betray the confidence reposed in us. I should therefore be in the highest degree guilty, were I to expose to the eyes of another the secrets of a heart, which has been disclosed to me alone. If Mademoiselle your daughter consents they should be given up to you, let her

speak—her letters are useless to you: if, on the contrary, she should think proper to keep her secrets to herself, you certainly will not expect, Madam, that I should disclose them.

As to the secrecy in which you wish this event may remain, rest satisfied, Madam, that in every thing that concerns Mademoiselle de Volanges, I may even set the heart of a mother at defiance. But to take away all manner of uneasiness from you, I have provided against every accident. This precious deposit, which formerly was superscribed, *Papers to be burnt*, is endorsed at present, *Papers belonging to Madame de Volanges*. This resolution may sufficiently convince you that my refusal is not influenced by any dread that you should find in those letters, a single sentiment that you should have any personal cause to complain of.

This, Madam, is a very long letter.

It would yet, however, be too short, if it left you room for the least doubt of the honour of my sentiments, the sincere regret I am under of having displeased you, and the profound respect with which I have the honour to be, &c.

*Sept. 7, 17—.*

---

## LETTER LXV.

### Chevalier Danceny *to* Cecilia Volanges.

*(Sent open to the Marchioness de Merteuil, in the 66th Letter of the Viscount.)*

Ah, my Cecilia! what will become of us? What will save us from the miseries that hang over us? Love, at least, can

give us resolution to support them. I cannot express my astonishment, my distraction, on seeing my letters, and reading Madame de Volanges'. Who is it can have betrayed us? On whom do your suspicions fall? Is it by any imprudent act of your own? How do you employ your time? What has been said to you? I wish to know all, and am ignorant of every thing. Perhaps you are in the same situation.

I enclose you your mamma's letter, with a copy of my answer to it. I hope you will approve of what I wrote: and I want much to be satisfied whether you will approve of the steps I have taken since this fatal discovery, which all tend to hear from you, and to be able to write to you; and, who knows, perhaps to see you again with more freedom than ever.

I can't express the joy, my Cecilia, I conceive at the prospect of seeing you

once more; renewing my vows of eternal love, and receiving yours. Who would not bear torments to enjoy so much happiness! I have this prospect in view; and the methods I mean to take, are what I beseech you to approve. I am indebted for them to the anxiety of a worthy friend; and I only ask that you will permit my friend to be also yours.

But, perhaps, I ought not to have engaged your confidence without your consent; misfortunes and necessity must plead in my favour. It is love led me on; it is love solicits your indulgence; implores you to forgive so necessary a confidence, without which we should be for ever separated.* You know the friend I mean; he is also the friend of

* Mr. Danceny is wrong; for he had already made a confidant of Mons. de Valmont. See Letter the 57th.

the woman you love best—the Viscount Valmont.

My design was, to engage him first to prevail on Madame de Merteuil to deliver you a letter. He was of opinion this scheme would not succeed; but he will answer for her waiting-maid, who lays under some obligations to him. She will then deliver you this letter, and you may trust her with your answer.

This means will be of very little use, if, as Mr. de Valmont tells me, you are to set out immediately for the country: but in that case he will be our friend. The lady, to whose house you are going, is his near relation. He will make use of this pretence to go there at the same time that you do; and we can carry on our correspondence through him. He even assures me, if you leave the management to him, he will provide us the means of seeing

each other, without danger of a discovery.

Now, my dear Cecilia, if you love me, if you compassionate my misfortunes, if, as I hope, you partake my sorrows, you will not refuse your confidence to a man who will be our guardian angel. Were it not for his assistance, I should be reduced even to despair of being able to soften the distresses I have caused you: I hope they will soon be at an end. But, my dearest life, promise me not to give way to them; neither suffer yourself to be too much dejected. The idea of your grief is an insupportable torment to me. I would cheerfully die to make you happy; you know it well. May the certainty of being adored, bring some small consolation to your soul. Let me be assured you pardon the evils my love has made you suffer, for my consolation.

Adieu, my dear Cecilia!

*Sept.* 9, 17—.

# LETTER LXVI.

## *The* VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to the* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL.

WHEN you have read the two inclosed letters, you will be able to judge, my charming friend, whether I have fulfilled your commission. Although they are both dated to-day, they were wrote yesterday, at my house, and under my inspection; that to the girl is every thing we could wish. I am humbled by the depth of your wisdom, if one may judge by the success of your proceedings. Danceny is all on fire; and you may be certain, that at the first opportunity, you will have nothing to reproach him with. If his fair one will be but tractable, every thing will ter-

minate as we wish in a little time after her arrival in the country. I am provided with sufficient schemes; thanks to your care. I am now decidedly Danceny's friend.

This same Danceny is yet very young. Would you believe it? I have never yet been able to prevail on him to promise the mother to renounce his love; as if there was any difficulty in promising, when one is determined not to keep one's word. It would be deceitful, says he incessantly. Is not this a most edifying scruple, especially when he is about seducing the daughter? This is the true picture of mankind; all equally profligate in their projects: if any weakness happens in the execution, they call it probity.

It is now your business to hinder Madame de Volanges from being startled at what little indiscretions he may have let fall in his letter; keep us out

of the convent; endeavour to make her relinquish her demand of the little one's letters: for he will not give them up, and I am of opinion he ought not: here love and sound sense agree. I have read those letters; I could hardly bear it; however, they may hereafter be useful.

Notwithstanding all our discretion, something may blaze abroad, which might break off the marriage, and render abortive all our Gercourt schemes: but as I must be revenged of the mother, for my own satisfaction, in that case, I must reserve to myself the debauching of the daughter. In selecting those letters, and only producing a part, the little Volanges would appear to have made the first advances, and have absolutely given herself up: and some of the letters might even entangle the mother, or, at least, make her appear guilty of an unpardonable negligence.

I readily conceive, that the scrupulous Danceny would at first be startled; but as he would be personally attacked, I believe he might be brought to. It is a thousand to one, that it does not happen so; but we must provide against every thing.

Adieu, my lovely friend! I would be glad you could sup to-morrow at the Marechalle de ——; I could not be off.

I think it unnecessary to recommend secrecy with Madame Volanges, about my country jaunt: she would soon [illegible] it into her head to remain in town; [illegible] w[illegible] ce arrived, she will not go back t[illegible] [illegible]ext day; and if she only gives us eight days, I will answer for every thing.

*Sept.* 9, 17—.

## LETTER LXVII.

*The* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL *to the* VISCOUNT DE VALMONT.

I WAS determined not to answer you any more, Sir, and; perhaps, the embarrassment I now experience, is the strongest proof that I ought not. Notwithstanding, I will leave you no cause of complaint against me; and will convince you that I have done every thing I ought.

I gave you leave to write to me, you say? I admit it; but when you put me in mind of this permission, do you think I forget the conditions on which it was granted? If I had adhered to them as strictly as you have disregarded them, you would not have received a

single line from me; yet this is now the third, and whilst you are doing every thing you possibly can to oblige me to break off this correspondence, I am employed in the means of keeping it up: There is one, and it is the only one, which, if you refuse, will be sufficient proof, say what you will, how little you esteem it:

Give over, then, a language that I neither can nor will hear; renounce a passion that terrifies and offends me; and which, perhaps, you should be the less attached to, as it is the only obstacle that separates us. Is this passion, then, the only one that you are capable of? is it so powerful as to exclude friendship? and could you possibly not wish to have her for a friend, whom you would wish to inspire with more tender sentiments? I cannot believe it: this humiliating idea would turn me against you for ever!

Thus offering you my friendship, Sir, I give you every thing that belongs to me; every thing that is at my disposal; what can you wish for more? To this proposition, so pleasing to my mind, I shall expect your consent; as also, your word of honour, that this friendship will constitute your happiness. I shall forget every thing that has been related to me, and I will depend upon your care to justify my choice.

You see how frankly I deal with you, which ought to be a proof of my confidence in you: it rests with you to increase it still more; but I must inform you, that the first expression of love will for ever destroy it, and will bring back all my fears: it will be the first signal of an eternal silence from me to you.

If, as you say, *you have abandoned your errors*, would you not rather be

the object of friendship of a virtuous woman, than that of the remorse of a guilty one? Adieu, Sir! You may conceive that having said thus much, I can say nothing more that you have not already answered.

*Sept.* 9, 17—.

---

## LETTER LXVIII.

VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to the* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL.

How is it possible, Madam, to answer your last letter; how shall I dare speak truth, when my sincerity may ruin me with you? Yet I must; I often tell myself, I would rather deserve than obtain you; and were you for ever to

refuse me a happiness I incessantly wish for, I will at least make you acknowledge, that my heart is worthy of it.

What a pity it is, as you say, *that I have abandoned my errors*, with what transport should I not have read that letter which I tremble to answer to-day? You deal *frankly* with me; you testify your *confidence*. You even offer me your friendship: how bountiful are you, Madam, and how much I regret I cannot benefit by them. Why am I no longer the same!

For if I really was, if I had but a common passion for you, that slight desire, the child of seduction and pleasure, which is yet now called love, I would speedily take advantage of every thing I could obtain, without being much concerned about the delicacy of the measures, provided they ensured success. I would flatter your frankness, in order to dive into you; I would

endeavour to gain your confidence with an intention to betray it; I would accept your friendship in the hope of leading you astray.—This picture, no doubt, alarms you, Madam;—but it would be the true portrait of myself, if I was to tell you that I consented to be your friend only.

What! Should I consent to share with another a sentiment proceeding from your soul? If I should ever tell you so, do not believe me. From that moment I would seek to deceive you; I might still have desires, but I certainly would love you no longer.

Not but your amiable frankness, your charming confidence, and your pleasing friendship, are immensely valuable to me;—but love, sincere love, such as you have inspired me with, reuniting all those sentiments, by giving them more energy, cannot, as they do, be satisfied with that tranquillity, that

ease of mind, which will allow of comparisons, and even sometimes of preferences. No, Madam, I will not be your friend, I will love you with the most ardent and tender affection, and yet the most respectful. You may deprive it of hope, but you cannot annihilate it.

What right have you to pretend to dispose of a heart, whose homage you refuse? By what refinement of cruelty do you envy me the happiness of my love? It belongs to me; and is independent of you; and I know how to preserve it. If it is the source, it is also the remedy of my misfortunes. Once more no, persist in your cruel resolutions; but leave me love. You enjoy the pleasure of my misery; be it so, endeavour to tire out my perseverance, I shall at least know how to oblige you to decide my fate; and you may, perhaps, one day do me justice.

Not that I ever hope to make you sensible of my pain, but you shall be convinced, though not persuaded; and you shall say I have judged him too severely.

But you are unjust to yourself: to see you without loving you, to love you without being constant, are both equally impossible; and, notwithstanding the modesty that adorns you, it must be easier for you to lament, than be astonished at the sentiments you gave birth to. But as for me, whose only merit is to have discovered their value, I will not lose it; and far from agreeing to your insidious offers, I again renew, at your feet, the oaths I have made to love you eternally.

*Sept.* 10, 17—.

## LETTER LXIX.

### CECILIA VOLANGES to the CHEVALIER DANCENY.

*(Wrote with a pencil, and re-copied by Danceny.)*

You desire to know how I spend my time? I love you, and am always crying. My mother speaks to me no longer; she has taken away my paper, pens, and ink; I now make use of a pencil, which I fortunately had in my pocket, and I write this on the back of your letter. I must certainly approve of whatever you have done; I love you too well, not to use every means to hear from you, and give you some account of myself. I did not use to love

Mr. de Valmont; I did not think him to be so much your friend; I will endeavour to accustom myself to him, and I will love him on your account. I cannot tell who betrayed us; it must be either my waiting-maid or my confessor. I am very unhappy: to-morrow we set out for the country, and I do not know for how long a time. Good God, not to see you any more! I have no more room, adieu! Endeavour to read this. Those letters, wrote with a pencil, will, perhaps, rub out; but the sentiments engraved on my heart never will.

*Sept.* 10, 17—.

## LETTER LXX.

### ISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to the* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL.

IY dear friend, I have a most imporŋt piece of news for you: last night supped, as you know, at the Mareialle de ———, where you were spoke '; I said not all the good that I think, it all that I did not think of you. very one seemed to be of my opinion, d the conversation languished, as it ways happens when people talk well ' their neighbours; when at length revan spoke, "God forbid, said he, rising up, that I should have the least doubt of the virtue of Madame de Merteuil; but I dare say, that she owes it more to levity than prin-

" ciple. It is, perhaps, easier to please
" her, than follow her; and as one
" seldom fails in running after a woman,
" to meet others in one's way, those
" may be as much, if not more, valu-
" able than she; some are dissipated by
" a new taste, others stop through
" lassitude; and she is, perhaps, one
" of the women who has had the least
" opportunity of making a resistance,
" of any of Paris; for my part, said
" he, (encouraged by the smiles of
" some of the women), I will not credit
" Madame de Merteuil's virtue, until
" I have killed six horses in her ser-
" vice."

This scurvy jest succeeded, as all those do that are replete with scandal; and whilst the laugh went round, Prevan seated himself, and the conversation became general; but the two Countesses de B——, near whom the incredulous Prevan seated himself,

began a particular conversation which I overheard.

The challenge that was given to bring you to compliance was accepted; and the promise of telling all was exchanged; of all those which passed in this conversation, that will be the most religiously observed: but now you have timely notice; and you know the the old proverb.

I have only to tell you, moreover, that this Prevan, who you do not know, is amazingly amiable, and still more subtle. If you have sometimes heard me say the contrary, it is only because I don't like him, and that I delight in contradicting his successes; for I am not ignorant how my opinion weighs with some thirty of our women à-la-mode.

And really I have, for a long time, prevented him by this means, of making a figure in what is called the grand

theatre. He worked prodigies without advancing his reputation. But the eclat of his triple adventure, by fixing every one's eyes on him, has given him a certain air of confidence that he, until then, wanted, and has made him truly formidable. He is, perhaps, at this time, the only man I dread meeting in my way; and, your interests apart, you will do me the greatest service in making him ridiculous. I leave him in good hands; and I hope at my return he will be a lost man.

In recompence, I promise you to bring the adventure of your pupil to a good issue, and to employ my time as much for her as my lovely prude.

She has just now sent me a plan of capitulation. Her whole letter announces a wish to be deceived. It is impossible to offer any means more commodious, or more stale. She will have me to be her friend. But I, who am

fond of new and difficult methods, will not let her off so easily; for certainly I have not taken so much pains about her, to terminate by the ordinary methods of seduction.

On the contrary, my design is, that she should feel the value, and the extent, of every one of the sacrifices she shall make; not to lead her on so fast, but that remorse may follow every step; to make her virtue expire in a slow agony; to fix her attention incessantly on that mortifying spectacle, and not to grant her the happiness of having me in her arms, till I have forced her to no longer dissemble her desire: for I am worth little indeed, if I am not worth the trouble of asking. Then I shall be revenged of a haughty woman, who seems to blush to own she adores.

I have then refused this precious friendship, and hold to my title of lover. As I am not ignorant that this title,

which at first appears but trifling, is, notwithstanding, of real importance to be obtained, I took peculiar care of my style, and endeavoured to scatter through my letter that kind of disorder which only can display sentiment, and talked as much nonsense as possible; for, without that, there is no tenderness: that, I believe, is the reason that women excel us so much in love letters.

I finished mine by a soothing sentence; that is another consequence of my profound observations. After a woman's heart has been some time kept in exercise, it wants rest: and I have often remarked, that a flattery is, for all of them, the softest pillow we can offer.

Adieu, my lovely friend. I set out to-morrow. If you have any orders to give me for the Countess de ——, I shall stop with her to dinner. I am sorry to set out without seeing you.

Forward me your sublime instructions, and assist me with your wise counsels in the decisive moment.

Above all, beware of Prevan; and may I one day indemnify you for this sacrifice. Adieu!

*Sept.* 11, 17—.

---

## LETTER LXXI.

### Viscount de Valmont *to the* Marchioness de Merteuil.

My blundering huntsman has left my letter-case at Paris. My fair one's letters, Danceny's for the little Volanges, all is left behind; and I want them all. He is just going to set off to repair his folly; and while he saddles his horse, I take the opportunity to give

you a detail of my night's adventure; for I hope you will believe I don't lose time.

It is in itself but trifling; being nothing more than another heat with the Viscountess de M———. The detail however is interesting. I am moreover pleased to let you know, that if I have the talent of ruining the women, I am no less clever in saving them when I am inclined. The most lively, or most difficult side, is what I always choose; and I never reproach myself with doing a good act, provided it entertains and amuses me.

I found the Viscountess here; and as she was very pressing with the other solicitations, that I should sleep here, "Well, I agree," said I, "on condition I sleep with you."—"That is impossible," said she; "Vressac is here." Until then I only meant to pass a joke; but the word *impossible*

roused me as usual. I was humbled to be sacrificed to Vressac; I determined not to bear it, and insisted on it.

The circumstances were not favourable for me. Vressac has been foolish enough to give umbrage to the Viscount; so that she cannot see him any longer at home: and this journey to the good Countess was concerted between them, to endeavour to steal a few nights. The Viscount seemed to be out of temper at meeting Vressac here; but as his passion for hunting is stronger than his jealousy, he has remained; notwithstanding the Countess, whom you well know, having fixed the wife in an apartment in the great gallery; placed the husband on one side, and the lover on the other, and left them to settle the matter between themselves. Their evil genius would have it that I should be lodged opposite to them.

Yesterday Vressac, who, as you may may believe, humours the Viscount, hunted with him, notwithstanding it is a diversion he is not fond of, and reckoned he would be consoled at night in the embraces of the wife, for the chagrin the husband gave him that day: but as I imagined he would have occasion for repose, I resolved to prevail on his mistress to give him time to take it.

I succeeded, and induced her to pick a quarrel with him about this hunting match, which he evidently agreed to only for her sake. A worse pretence never could have been hit on: but no woman knows better than the Viscountess how to employ that usual talent of all, to affect ill temper instead of reason, and to be never so difficult to be appeased as when they are in the wrong. Besides, it was not a convenient time for explanations; and as I only wished

for one night with her, I consented they should make it up the next day.

Vressac was then huffed at his return. He wanted to know the reason she quarrelled with him; he endeavoured to justify himself; the husband, who was present, was the apology for breaking off the conversation; he however attempted to seize the opportunity, when the husband was absent, to beg he might be heard at night. Then the Viscountess was sublime: she was exasperated at the audacity of men, who, because they have experienced a woman's affection, think themselves entitled to abuse it; when, at the same time, the woman has every cause to be offended; and having changed her argument, she spoke so well, on delicacy and sentiment, that Vressac was mute and confounded; and I even thought she was right: for you must know, as a friend to both, I made up the trio.

She at length declared positively she would not increase the fatigues of the chase by the additional ones of love, and that she could not think of disturbing such pleasing amusements. The husband returned. The unhappy Vressac, who could no longer reply, addressing himself to me; after relating, with much circumlocution, his reasons, which I was as well satisfied with as he could be, requested I would speak to the Viscountess, which I promised him: and I did; but it was to thank her, and settle the hour and method of meeting.

She informed me, that, being situated between her husband and lover, she thought it more prudent to go to Vressac, than to receive him in her apartment; and that as I was fixed opposite to her, she thought it would be better to come to my room; that she would come the moment her maid

left her; only to leave my door open, and wait for her.

Every thing was done as agreed on; and she came to me about one.

Not being much inclined to vanity, I shall not enter into particulars: however, you know me well; I was well pleased with myself.

At dawn of day we were forced to part. Here the tale begins. The giddy creature thought she had left her door half open; we found it shut, and the key withinside. You can't conceive the distraction of the Viscountess. "Ah! I am undone," she exclaimed. I must own it would have been whimsical to have left her so; but was it possible to think a woman should be ruined for me, that was not ruined by me? And should I, as the generality of men do, be overcome by an accident? A lucky thought occurred, and thus I settled the business.

I soon perceived the door might be broke upon, but not without some noise. With some difficulty I prevailed on the Viscountess to cry out, Robbers, murder, thieves, &c. &c. We had so settled it, that, at the first alarm, I should burst open the door, and she should fly to her bed. You can't imagine how difficult it was to make her resolve, even after she had consented. She was, however, obliged to comply; and at the first burst the door flew open.

The Viscountess was right not to lose a moment; for instantly the Viscount and Vressac were in the gallery, and the waiting maid in her mistress's chamber.

I alone was cool, and overturned a watch light that was burning; for it would have been ridiculous to have feigned such a panic, having a light in the room. I scolded the husband and lover for their drowsiness, confi-

dently insisting that her cries, and my efforts to burst open the door, had lasted at least five minutes.

The Viscountess, who recovered her courage in bed, seconded me tolerably well, and strenuously insisted there was a robber in her room; but with something more sincerity she declared she never had been more frightened in her life. We searched every where, but found nothing; at last I made them observe the watch light overturned: we concluded a rat had given us this fright and disturbance. My opinion was unanimously adopted. After some stale jests on rats, the Viscount returned to bed, begging she would in future choose more peaceable rats.

Vressac drew near the Viscountess, and passionately told her, Love revenged him; to which she replied, fixing her eyes on me, "He must "then have been very angry indeed:

"for he has had ample satisfaction; "but I am much fatigued, and want "rest."

I was very well pleased. Before we parted, I pleaded so powerfully for Vressac, that I brought about a reconciliation. The lovers embraced, and I also received theirs. I was indifferent to the Viscountess's kisses; but I own I was pleased with Vressac's. We left her; after having received his thanks, we returned to our beds.

If the tale diverts you, I don't mean to bind you to secrecy. Now I have had my amusement, it is right the public should also have their share. For this time you have only the history; hereafter we shall talk of the heroine.

Adieu. My huntsman has been in waiting an hour. I particularly recommend it to you to be on your guard against Prevan.

*From the Castle of——,*

*Sept.* 15, 17—.

## LETTER LXXII.

### CHEVALIER DANCENY *to* CECILIA VOLANGES.

(*Delivered only the 14th.*)

OH, my Cecilia! How much I envy Valmont's good fortune; to-morrow he will see you. He will deliver you this letter; whilst I, languishing far from you, will lead a wretched lingering life. Between regret and misery, my life, my dearest life, pity me not only for my own misfortunes, but also for yours; for it is they that deprive me of my resolution.

How dreadful the reflection, to be the cause of your misery! Had it not been for me, you would have been happy; will you forgive me? Speak!

Say you forgive me; tell me you love me; that you will love me ever, which is the only consolation that is now left me. Not that I doubt it; but it relieves my anguish; you love me then? Yes, you love me with your whole heart. I do not forget it was the last word you spoke: it is treasured in mine; it is there deeply engraved. With what transports did my heart answer it!

Alas, in that happy moment, I was far from foreseeing the dreadful fate that awaited us! Let us seek for means to soften it. If I am to believe my friend, it will be enough that you should have the confidence in him he deserves. I was chagrined, I must own, at the disadvantageous idea you had of him. I knew the bad opinion your mamma had imbibed, and in sub mission to that opinion, I had, for some time, neglected a truly amiable man, who now is ready to serve me;

who endeavours to reunite us, whilst your mamma has cruelly torn you from me. I conjure you, my love, to have a more favourable opinion of him; remember he is my friend, and wishes to be yours; that he can procure me the happiness of seeing you. If those reasons do not convince you, my Cecilia, you do not love me as much as I love you; you no longer love me as you did. Ah! if you should ever love me less,—but no, Cecilia's heart is mine: I have it for life; and if I must feel the torments of an unsuccessful passion, her constancy, at least, will insure me the inexpressible joy of a permanent affection.

Adieu, my lovely dear! Do not forget that I suffer; it will be your fault if I am not perfectly happy; attend to the vows of my heart, and receive the tender kisses of love.

*Sept.* 11, 17—.

## LETTER LXXIII.

### VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to* CECILIA VOLANGES.

*(Annexed to the foregoing.)*

THE friend who takes upon him to assist you, knows that you have not materials to write with, therefore has provided them for you. You will find in the anti-chamber of your apartment, under the great clothes press on the left hand, paper, pens, and ink, which he will renew whenever you please, and which, he thinks, you may leave in the same place, if you cannot find a better.

He requests you will not be offended, if he seems to take little notice of

you in company, and only to treat you as a child. This behaviour appears necessary to him, to avoid suspicion, and to be able more effectually to bring about your and his friend's happiness. He will endeavour to get opportunities to speak to you, when he has any thing to say or to give you; and hopes to be able to accomplish it, if, on your part, you will second him.

He also advises you to give him the letters you will receive, after you have read them, in order to avoid all bad consequences.

He finishes his letter by assuring you, if you confide in him, he will employ his utmost endeavours to soften the persecution that a cruel mother makes two persons undergo; one of which is his best friend, and the other seems to him to deserve his tenderest concern.

*Castle of —, Sept.* 14, 17—.

## LETTER LXXIV.

### MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL *to* VISCOUNT DE VALMONT.

YOU are very soon alarmed, my dear friend: this Prevan must be formidable indeed, but what a simple modest creature am I, who have often met this haughty conqueror, and have scarce ever looked at him; nothing less than your letter would have made me pay the least attention to him. I corrected my error yesterday; he was at the Opera, almost opposite to me; I was captivated with him. He is not only handsome, but very handsome; fine delicate features, and must improve on a clearer inspection. You say, he wants to have me, he certainly will do me a

great deal of honour and pleasure; but seriously, I have taken a fancy to him, and tell you, in confidence, I have taken the first step towards an advance. I do not know whether I shall succeed, but this is fact.

He was at a very little distance from me, coming out of the Opera, and I gave a rendezvous to the Marquis de ———, to sup on Friday at the Lady Marechelle's, so loud that he might hear, which, I believe, is the only house I can meet him in; and have not the least doubt but he heard me. If the ungrateful wretch should not come— Tell me sincerely, do you think he will? I protest if he does not, I shall be out of temper the whole evening. You see he will not find so much *difficulty in following me;* and what will surprise you more is, he will find less in *pleasing me.* He says he will kill six horses in paying his addresses to me; oh! the

poor animals shall not die. I should never have patience to wait so long. You know it is not my principle to make any one languish, when once I am decided in their favour, as I really am in his.

Now, you must agree, there is some pleasure in talking rationally to me, has not your *important advice* had great success; but what can I do? I vegetate for a long time; it is more than six weeks since I have permitted myself a gaiety; this is the first, how can I refuse it? Is not the subject worth the trouble? Can there be any one more agreeable in every sense of the word?

You are obliged to do him justice; you do more than praise him; you are jealous of him. Well, I shall judge between you both, but first I must take informations, and that is what I mean to do. Be assured I shall be an upright judge; you shall be both

weighed in the same scale; for your part, I have already received your memorial, am entirely acquainted with your affairs. Is it not reasonable that I should also know your adversary's case? Come, go through your business with a good grace, and to begin, inform me, I beg of you, this triple adventure, of which he is the hero. You talk to me as if I knew the whole matter, who never heard a word of it. Probably it happened during the time of my journey to Geneva, and your jealousy prevented you from giving me an account of it. Repair this fault immediately; remember *that every thing that* interests him, *is of consequence to me.* I think it was spoke of at my return; but I was so taken up with other matters, I rarely pay attention to any thing of this kind that is not new.

If what I require should be even contrary to your inclination, remember

how much you are indebted to me for the cares and solicitude I have had upon your account. Is it not to them you are indebted for being now with your Presidente, when your own folly drove you from her? Have I not put it in your power to be revenged of Madame de Volanges, for her acrimonious zeal against you? How often have you deplored the time you lost in search of adventures, now you have them at command? Love, hatred, make your choice, they are under the same roof with you; by doubling your existence, you can caress with the one hand, and strike with the other.....

It is to me even you are indebted, for the adventure of the Vicountess— It pleases me. I agree with you it must be published, for if the opportunity influenced you, as I am apt to think, to prefer mystery to rumour; at that time you must acknowledge, not-

withstanding, this woman does not deserve so handsome a procedure.

Moreover, I have reason to dislike her; the Chevalier de Bellroche thinks her handsomer than me, and for several reasons I would be glad to break off with her; there is none more plausible than to have a story to relate, one cannot keep company with her after.

Farewel, Viscount! Remember that as you are situated, time is precious: I will employ mine in thinking how to make Prevan happy.

*Sept*, 15, 17—.

## LETTER LXXV.

### Cecilia Volanges *to* Sophia Carnay.

[In this Letter, Cecilia Volanges gives a most circumstantial account of every thing that relates to herself, in the events which the reader has seen at the end of the first volume, the 59th Letter, and the following; for this reason a repetition was thought unnecessary; at last she speaks of Viscount de Valmont, and thus expresses herself:]

I assure you he is a very extraordinary man: my mamma speaks very ill of him, but the Chevalier Danceny is enamoured with him, and I believe he is in the right. I never saw a man so artful; when he gave me Danceny's letter, it was amongst a good deal of company,

and no one knew any thing of the matter. It is true I was very much frightened, because I had no notion of any such thing, but hereafter I shall be on the watch. I conceive, already, how he would have me return the answer; it is very easy to understand him, for he has an eye tells one every thing; I do not know how he contrives: he told me in the note which I mentioned to you, he would not seem to take any notice of me before mamma; really one would imagine he never thinks of it, and yet every time I want to look at him, I am sure to meet his eyes fixed upon me.

There is a lady here, also an intimate friend of mamma's, I ~~did not~~ know, who appears to me not to like Mr. de Valmont. Although he seems to be all attention to her, I am afraid he will soon grow tired of this life, and return to Paris; that would be dreadful indeed! He must be an exceeding good-natured

man, to come here on purpose to serve his friend and me. I wish to know how I could testify my gratitude; but I don't know how to speak to him; and if I even had the opportunity, I should be so ashamed I should not know what to say.

I cannot speak to any body freely, about my love affair, but Madame de Merteuil; perhaps even with thee, to whom I tell every thing, if it was in a chatting way, I should be abashed. Even with Danceny himself, I have often felt, as it were, against my inclination, a kind of fear, which prevented me from saying every thing I could wish. I am very sorry for it now, and I would give any thing in the world for a moment, to tell him only once how much I love him. Mr. de Valmont has promised him, if I will be ruled by him, he will find an opportunity for us to see each other. I am very well inclined

to do whatever he would have me; but I can't conceive how it is possible.

Farewel, my dear friend: I have no more room.*

*From the Castle of* ——,
*Sept.* 14, 17—.

---

## LETTER LXXVI.

VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to the* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL.

I CANNOT comprehend you; you were either in a whimsical mood, or, when you wrote, in a very dangerous fit of madness. If I did not know you very

* Mademoiselle de Volanges having a little time after changed her confidant, as will be seen in the following Letters, there will no more be given in this collection of those she continued to write to her friend in the convent.

well, my charming friend, I should be really alarmed; and, colour it as you will, I should have a great deal of reason.

Vainly do I read, and read again, your letter. I can't conceive you; for it is impossible to take your letter in the style it is couched; what did you then mean to say? Did you only mean there was no occasion to give oneself so much trouble against so despicable an enemy: if so, you are wrong. Prevan is really amiable; he is more so than you imagine; and has, in a peculiar manner, that happy talent of interesting one much about love affairs, which he introduces on every occasion, and in all companies. Few women can avoid the snare of replication, because, as they all have pretensions to artifice, none will lose the opportunity of displaying it. And I need not tell you that a woman, who consents to talk of love, commonly

ends with being entrapped, or, at least, acts as if she was. He refines on this method, which he has even brought to a science, by often introducing the women themselves as witnesses of their own defeat: this I aver, and can prove.

I was let into the secret only at second hand; for I never was intimate with Prevan. We were six in company: the Countess de P——, thinking herself amazingly fine, and even possessing the talent of keeping up a general conversation well, related to us minutely the manner she had surrendered to Prevan, with all circumstances. She gave the recital with so much composure, that she was not even disconcerted at a smile which escaped us all at the same time. I shall never forget, one of us, to excuse himself, feigned to doubt what she said, or rather what she related; she gravely answered, that none of us could be so well informed as she; and she

was not even afraid to call upon Prevan, and ask him whether she had omitted a single circumstance.

This I think sufficient to call him a very dangerous man: but is it not enough for you, Marchioness, he is *handsome, very handsome,* as you say? Or that he should make on you *one of those attacks that you are sometimes fond of rewarding, for no other motive, but because you think it well carried on?* Or that you would think it pleasing to surrender for any reason whatever? Or—but it is impossible for me to guess the infinity of whims which rule the minds of women, and by which alone you resemble your sex. Now you are informed of the danger, I have no doubt; but you may easily avoid it; and yet it was necessary to put you on your guard. I return to my text; what do you mean to say?

If it is not a banter on Prevan, be-

sides its being very long, it is not to me it can be useful; it is in the face of the world you must make him ridiculous; and I renew my instances to you on that subject.

Ah! I believe I have discovered the enigma. Your letter is a prophecy; not what you will do, but what he will believe you ready to do, at the moment of his disgrace. I approve this project well enough; however, it requires great management. You know, as well as I do, it is absolutely the same thing to the public, whether you are connected with a man, or receive his addresses, unless the man is a fool, which Prevan is not by any means; if he can only save appearances, he will brag, and every thing will be greedily swallowed. Fools will believe him, others will seem to believe him; and then what becomes of your resources? I am really alarmed; not that I have any doubt of your

abilities; but the best swimmers are often drowned.

I think myself no novice in the ways of debauchery. I have discovered a hundred, nay, a thousand. My mind is often engaged in thinking how a woman could escape me, and I never could find out the possibility. Even yourself, my charming friend, whose conduct is a masterpiece; I have often thought your success was more owing to good fortune than good management.

After all, I am, perhaps, seeking a reason where there is none; and I am astonished I have been for this hour past treating seriously a subject that you certainly mean as a jest. How you will laugh at me! but be it so; let us talk of something else. I am wrong; it must be the same subject; always of women to be had or ruined, and often of both.

I have here wherewithal, as you justly remark, to give me employment in both capacities, but not with equal facility. I foresee revenge will outstrip love. The little Volanges is ready, I will answer for her; all now depends upon the opportunity which I take upon me to provide: but not so with Madame de Tourvel; this woman distracts me. I have no conception of her. I have a hundred proofs of her love; but I have also a thousand of her resistance. Upon my word, I am afraid she will escape me.

The first effect that my return produced gave me more flattering expectations. You may guess, I was willing to judge for myself; and to be certain of seeing her first emotions, I took care not to be announced by any formality, calculating my journey so as to arrive while they were at dinner, and fell from the clouds like an opera divinity.

Having made a sufficient noise coming in to draw their attention to me, I could observe with the same glance my old aunt's joy, Madame de Volanges's vexation, and the confused pleasure of her daughter. My fair one sat with her back to the door. Being employed at that instant cutting up something, she did not even turn her head. I addressed myself to Madame de Rosemonde; and at the first word, the tender devotee hearing my voice, gave a scream, in which I thought there was more of love than surprise or terror. I was then got so far into the room as to be able to observe her countenance; the tumult of her soul, the struggle of ideas and sentiments, were strongly depicted in twenty different forms on it. I seated myself at table close by her; she did not know what she said or did. She endeavoured to keep on eating; but it was in vain. At length, in less than

a quarter of an hour, her pleasure and her embarrassment overpowering her, she thought it best to beg leave to retire from table, under a pretence of wanting a little air. Madame de Volanges wanted to accompany her; the tender prude would not permit it: too happy, doubtless, to find a pretence to be alone, and give herself up without restraint to the soft emotions of her heart.

I dispatched my dinner as soon as possible. The dessert was scarcely served, when the infernal Volanges, probably with a design to prejudice me, got up to follow the charming woman. I foresaw this project, but disappointed her. I feigned to take this particular motion for a general one; and rising at the same time, the little Volanges and the curate of the place followed our example, so that Madame de Rosemonde was left at

table with the old Commander de T—, who both also took the resolution to follow us. We all went then to join my fair one, whom we found in the arbour near the castle; and as she wanted solitude more than a walk, she chose rather to return with us, than to blige us to stay with her. As soon as I was certain that Madame de Volanges would not have an opportunity of speaking to her alone, I began to think of executing your orders, and exert myself for the interest of your pupil. When coffee was over, I went up to my apartment, entered the other's to reconnoitre the ground, and formed my dispositions to ensure the correspondence of the little one. After this first step, I wrote a few words to inform her of it; and to demand her confidence, I tacked my note to Danceny's letter; returned to the saloon, where I found my fair one stretched upon a sofa at

full length, in a most delicious abandonment.

This sight rousing my desires, animated my looks. I knew they should be tender, yet urgent; and placed myself in such a manner, as to be able to employ them successfully. Their first essay obliged my celestial prude to cast down her beautiful modest eyes. I viewed for some time this angelic figure; then running over her whole frame, amused myself with considering the outlines and forms of her person through the light dress she wore. After gazing on her from head to foot, my eyes went back from the feet to the head—my charming friend, the soft look was fixed on me, but she instantly cast her eyes down again; being desirous of bringing them back, I turned my eyes from her. Then was established between us that silent convention, the first

treaty of timid lovers, who to satisfy the mutual want of seeing each other, permit soft looks to succeed until they mingle together.

Fully satisfied that my charmer was entirely taken up with this new delight, I took upon me to watch for our mutual safety: but when I was assured that a pretty lively conversation took off the attention of the company, I endeavoured to make the eyes freely speak their own language. At first I darted some glances, but with so much reserve, that modesty itself could not be alarmed at it; and to make the lovely timid woman easier, I appeared as much embarrassed as she; by little and little, our eyes accustomed to meet, fixed themselves a little longer, and at length did not quit each other; I perceived in hers that soft languishing air, happy presage to love and desire: but it was only for

a moment; and she soon recovered herself; she changed her looks and position with some confusion.

As I determined she should have no doubt of my remarking her different emotions, I started suddenly, asking her, with a frightened look, if she was indisposed. Immediately the company assembled round her. I let them all pass before me; and as the little Volanges, who was working tapestry near a window, took some time in quitting her frame, I seized the opportunity to give her Danceny's letter.

I was a little distance from her, and threw the letter in her lap. She really did not know what to do. You would have laughed to see her surprise and embarrassment; yet I did not laugh, lest so much awkwardness should betray us: but a glance and a frown made her comprehend that she was to put it in her pocket.

The remainder of the day had nothing interesting. What has happened since, will, perhaps, bring on events that will please you, at least, as to what regards your pupil; but it is better to employ one's time in executing than in relating them: moreover, this is the eighth page I have written, and I am a good deal fatigued; so adieu.

It will be unnecessary to tell you, that the little thing has answered Danceny.* I have also had a letter from my fair one, to whom I wrote the day after my arrival. I send you both letters. You will read them, or let it alone; for those perpetual tiresome repetitions, of which I begin to be disgusted, must be very insipid for a person unconcerned.

Once more, adieu! I still love you much: but I beg, if you speak again

* This letter was not found.

of Prevan, that it may be in intelligible language.

*From the Castle of* ——,

*Sept.* 17, 17—.

---

## LETTER LXXVII.

VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to the* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL.

FROM whence proceeds, Madam, the cruel care you take to avoid me? How does it happen, that the most tender eagerness on my part, can only obtain from you an indifference, that one could scarcely justify to a man who had even done one an injury? When love recals me to your feet, and a happy accident places me beside you, you would rather feign an indisposition, and

alarm your friends, than consent to remain near me. How often yesterday did you turn away your eyes from me, to deprive me of the pleasure of a look; and if, for an instant, I could observe less severity in them, it seemed as if you intended not that I should enjoy it, but that I should feel my loss in being deprived of it.

This is, I dare say, a treatment not consistent with love, nor can it be permitted to friendship; and yet you know that one of those sentiments animates me, and I thought myself authorised to believe you would not refuse me the other. This precious friendship, which you undoubtedly thought me worthy of, as you condescended to offer it, what have I since done to forfeit? Have I prejudiced myself by my frankness; and will you punish me for my candour? Are you not, at least, afraid of offending the one or the other? For

is it not in the bosom of my friend I deposit the secrets of my heart? Is it not to her alone I thought myself obliged to refuse conditions which, had I accepted, would give me an opportunity of breaking them, and, perhaps, of successfully abusing them? Or would you force me to believe, by so undeserved a rigour, if I had deceived you, I should have gained more indulgence?

I do not repent of a conduct I owe to you and myself: but by what fatality is it, that every laudable action of mine becomes the signal of a new misfortune to me?

And after having, by my obedience, merited the only praise you have vouchsafed to bestow on my conduct, I now, for the first time, lament the misfortune of displeasing you. After giving you proofs of my entire submission, by depriving myself of the happiness of

seeing you, to please your delicacy, you want to break off your correspondence with me, and take away this feeble amends of a sacrifice you exacted, to deprive me of my love, which alone could have given you that right. In fine, it is after speaking to you with a sincerity which even my love could not weaken, you fly from me to-day as a dangerous seductor, whose perfidiousness was fully proved.

Will you then never cease being unjust? Inform me, at least, what new wrongs I have committed, that could cause so much severity; and do not refuse to precribe the orders you would have me follow. Surely it is not too much to desire to know, when I engage to execute them.

*Sept.* 15, 17—.

## LETTER LXXVIII.

*The* PRESIDENTE DE TOURVEL *to the* VISCOUNT DE VALMONT.

YOU seem surprised, Sir, at my behaviour; and, indeed, your style falls little short of calling me to account, as if you were authorised to blame it. I really think I have much more reason for astonishment and complaint; but since the refusal contained in your last answer, I have taken my resolution to behave with an indifference that may not give any occasion for remarks or reproaches; yet as you ask some eclaircissements which, I thank heaven, I find no difficulty in giving, I will once more explain myself.

Any person who should read your

letters would think me either unjust or fantastical. I don't think I deserve that character; but I am of opinion, you above all the rest of mankind would be the readiest to catch at it. You must be sensible, that in putting me under the necessity of a justification, you oblige me to recal every thing that has passed between us. You imagined you would gain by the scrutiny: I am inclined to think, I may even stand the test in your opinion; and perhaps it is the only way to discover which of us has a right to complain.

To begin, Sir, from the day of your arrival at this castle. You will acknowledge, I hope, your character authorised me at least to be upon the reserve, and I might, without apprehending the imputation of an excess of prudery, have restricted myself to exact politeness. You yourself would have

behaved to me with deference, and only thought it strange, that a plain woman, so unacquainted with the ways of the world, had not sufficient penetration to appreciate your merit; that would have been certainly the most prudent method, and which I was so much inclined to follow, that I will freely own, when Madame de Rosemonde came to inform me of your arrival, I had occasion to recollect my friendship for her, and hers for you, to conceal my uneasiness at the unwelcome news.

I will freely own, at first you exhibited a behaviour much more favourable to you than what I had conceived: but you must also allow, it lasted but a very short time; and that you soon grew tired of a constraint, for which you did not think yourself sufficiently indemnified by the advantageous idea I had of you.

Then taking advantage of my can-

dour and tranquillity, you did not scruple cherishing sentiments which you could not have the least doubt but would offend me; and whilst you was every day multiplying and aggravating the wrongs you did me, I endeavoured to forget them, and even offered you an opportunity, in some measure, of redressing them. My requisition was so fair, that you even thought you could not refuse it, but asserting a right from my indulgence, you made use of it to demand a permission, which doubtless I ought not to have granted, and which yet you obtained. The conditions annexed to it you did not observe; your correspondence was such, that each letter made it a duty to answer you no more. Even at the very time when your obstinacy obliged me to insist on your going away, that by a blameable condescension I sought the only means which, consistent with duty,

was allowed me not to break entirely with you. But an humble sentiment has no value in your eyes. You despise friendship ; and in your mad intoxication, ridiculing misery and shame, you seek nothing but victims and pleasure.

As fickle in your proceedings, as contrary to your own principles in your charges, you forget your promises, or you make a jest of violating them ; and after consenting to depart from me, you come back without being recalled, without paying the least regard to my solicitations or my reasons, without even the decency of a notice. You ventured to expose me to a surprise, which, although very simple in itself, might have been interpreted very unfavourably for me by the persons who were present, and, far from endeavouring to dissipate this moment of embarrassment you gave birth to, you care-

fully sought to augment it. At table you chose precisely to place yourself beside me. A slight indisposition obliged me to go out before any of the company; and instead of paying any respect to my solitude, you bring them all to disturb me. Being returned again into the saloon, if I move, you follow me; if I speak, you always reply to me. The most indifferent word is a pretence for you to bring on a conversation, which I do not wish to hear, and which often may bring my name in question; for notwithstanding all your address, Sir, I believe others can see as well as me.

Thus, then, reduced to a state of inaction and silence, you nevertheless continue to pursue me. I cannot lift my eyes without meeting yours. I am incessantly obliged to turn my looks from you; and by an inconsequence, you fix the eyes of the whole company

on me, at a time when I could even wish to hide myself from my own.

Yet you complain of my behaviour, and are astonished at my anxiety to fly from you. Blame rather my indulgence, and be astonished I did not set out the moment you arrived. I ought to have done it; perhaps you will yet oblige me to this violent, though necessary measure, if you do not cease your offensive pursuits. No; I never will forget what I owe to myself, what I owe to the obligations I have taken, which I respect and cherish. Be assured, if I should ever be reduced to the unhappy choice of sacrificing myself or them, I would not hesitate a moment.

*Sept.* 16, 17—.

## LETTER LXXIX.

*The* Viscount de Valmont *to the* Marchioness de Merteuil.

I thought to have gone a-hunting this morning, but it is most horrible weather. I have no book to read but a new romance that would tire a boarding-school girl. We shall not breakfast these two hours; therefore, notwithstanding my long letter of yesterday, I will still chat with you, and am confident you will not think me tedious, for I will entertain you concerning *the very handsome Prevan.*

So you know nothing at all about this famous adventure which separated the *inseparables.* I would venture to lay a wager, you will recollect it at the

first word. I will give it you, however, since you desire it.

You may remember all Paris was astonished, three women equally handsome, equally possessing the same talents, and having the same pretensions, should remain so intimately connected since the time of their appearance in the world. At first it was imagined it proceeded from their great timidity; but soon surrounded by a number of gallants, whose homages they shared, they soon began to feel their consequence, by the eagerness and assiduity with which they were followed. Still their union became the stronger. One would have imagined the triumph of one was also that of the other two; however, every one flattered himself that love would cause a rivalship. Those fair ones contended for the honour of the apple of discord; and I myself would have been a competitor, if the

high reputation the Countess de —— was in at that time would have permitted me to have committed an infidelity before I had obtained the consummation of my desires.

However, our three beauties that same carnival made their choice, as if in concert; and far from exciting any disturbance, it rendered their friendship more interesting by the charms of confidence.

The crowd of unfortunate pretenders coalesced with the envious women, and this scandalous constancy was submitted to public censure. Some promulgated, that in this society of *the inseparables*, so called at that time, the fundamental law was, that every thing should be in common, that love even was subservient to the same law. Others asserted, that the three lovers were not exempt from rivals. Others went so far as to say, they had only

been admitted for decency sake, and had only obtained a sinecure title.

These reports, whether true or false, had not their wished-for effect; the three couple perceived plainly they were undone if they separated at this period, therefore resolved to stem the torrent. The public, who soon tire of every thing, shortly gave up a fruitless scandal. Carried away by their natural levity, they were engaged in other pursuits. Returning again to this, with their usual inconsequence, they changed their criticisms to commendations. As every thing is here fashionable, the enthusiasm gained ground, and became a perfect rage, when Prevan undertook to verify those prodigies, and to fix the public opinion and his own on them.

He then laid himself out for those models of perfection. Being easily admitted into their society, from thence

he drew a favourable omen; he very well knew, those who lived in a happy state were not so accessible; and soon perceived the so-much-boasted happiness, like that of kings, was more envied than desirable. He observed among those pretended inseparables, they began to seek for pleasures abroad, they were often absent; from thence he concluded, the ties of love or friendship were already relaxed or broken; that those of self-love and habit still preserved some kind of strength.

Still the women, whom necessity kept together, preserved the same appearance of intimacy among themselves: but the men, more free in their proceedings, found duties to fulfil, or business to do, which they always lamented, but nevertheless did not neglect; their meetings were thus scarcely ever complete.

This behaviour was very useful to

the assiduous Prevan, who being, in course, at liberty with the widow of the day, alternately found an opportunity of offering the same homage to the three friends. He readily saw, if he made a choice, it would be his destruction; the shame of being discovered to be the first transgressor would deter the one who had the preference, and the vanity of the two others would render them mortal enemies of the new lover; they would not fail to display all their resentment against him, and jealousy would certainly recal a rival, who, perhaps, might be troublesome. Thus every thing was attended with difficulty: but in his triple project, every thing was made easy; each woman was indulgent, because she was interested, and each man, because he thought he was not.

Prevan was engaged to only one woman at that time. Fortunately for

him, the sacrifice was not very difficult, as she became celebrated. The addresses of a great prince, which had been dexterously rejected, together with her being a foreigner, had drawn the attention of the court and town upon her. Her lover shared the honour, and made a very good use of it with his new mistresses; the only difficulty was, to carry on those three intrigues in front, whose march should be regulated by the movements of the slowest: and I have been assured by one of his confidents, that his greatest trouble was to retard one of them who was ripe a fortnight before the others.

At length the expected day came. Prevan, who had obtained the consent of them all, regulated their motions in the following manner: One of the husbands was absent, another was to go on a journey early the next morning, the third remained in town. The in-

separable friends had agreed to sup with the future widow; but the new master would not suffer any of the old servants to be invited. The morning of the same day, he divided into three lots the fair foreigner's letters. In the one he enclosed her picture; in the second, an amorous cypher she herself had drawn; the third enclosed a lock of her hair. Each received her share of sacrifice, and, in return, consented to send to their discarded lovers, letters of dismission.

That was doing a great deal; but yet was not enough. She whose husband was in town, was at liberty during the day only; and it was agreed, that a feigned indisposition should prevent her from supping with her friend, but the evening should be dedicated to Prevan; the night was granted by her whose husband was out of town; and day-light, the time the third hus-

band was to set off, was the happy moment allotted for the other.

Prevan, who neglects nothing, flies to the fair foreigner's in an ill humour, which soon spread, and leaves her, after an altercation which brought on a quarrel that ensured him leave of absence for twenty-four hours at least. His dispositions thus made, he returned home, to take some repose; but other affairs awaited him.

The letters of dismission had opened the eyes of the discarded lovers; none of them had the least doubt but that he was sacrificed to Prevan: and the vexation of being tricked, with the mortification of being discarded, they all three, as if in concert, but without communicating with each other, resolved to have satisfaction, and demanded it accordingly of their fortunate rival.

So that at his arrival he found three

challenges, which he nobly accepted: but unwilling to lose the pleasure or reputation of this adventure, he fixed the meeting for the next morning, all three at the same hour and place, at one of the gates of the wood of Boulogne.

Night being come, he run his triple career with equal success; at least, he has since vaunted, that each of his new mistresses had received three times the pledges of his love. Here, as you may well imagine, the proofs are deficient. All that can be required from the impartial historian is to request the incredulous reader to remark, that vanity, and an exalted imagination can bring forth prodigies. Moreover, the morning that was to follow so brilliant a night, seemed to excuse circumspection for the events of the day. The following facts have, however, a greater degree of certainty.

Prevan came punctually to the place appointed, where he found his three rivals, who were a little surprised at meeting each other, and perhaps, partly consoled on seeing the companions of their misfortunes. He accosted them with an affable and cavalier air, and made them the following speech, which has been faithfully related to me:

"Gentlemen," said he, "meeting "here together, you certainly guess "that you have all the same subject of "complaint against me. I am ready "to give you satisfaction: but let "chance decide between you, which "of you three will be the first to re-"quire a satisfaction that you have all "an equal right to. I have brought "neither witness nor second. I had "not any in the commission of the "offence: I do not require any in the "reparation." Then, agreeable to his character of a gamester, "I know,"

says he, "one seldom holds in three "hands running; but be my fate what "it will, the man has lived long "enough who has gained the love of "the women and the esteem of the "men."

Whilst his adversaries, astonished, silently looked on each other, and, perhaps, hurt at the indelicacy of this triple combat, which made the party very unequal, Prevan resumed, "I "will not conceal from you, that last "night has been a very fatiguing one. "It would be but generous to give me "time to recruit. I have given order "to prepare a breakfast; do me the "honour to accept of it. Let us "breakfast together with good hu-"mour. One may fight for such "trifles; but I don't think it should "have any effect on our spirits."

The breakfast was accepted. It is said, Prevan never shone more. He

not only had the address not to mortify his rivals, but even to persuade them, they all would have easily had the same success; and made them agree, that none would have let slip the opportunity no more than himself. Those facts being acknowledged, the matter was entirely settled; and before breakfast was over, they often repeated, that such women did not deserve that men of honour should quarrel about them. This idea brought on cordiality; the wine strengthened it; so that in a short time afterwards, an unreserved friendship succeeded rancour.

Prevan, who doubtless liked this denouement as well as the other, would not, however, lose his celebrity; and dexterously forming his projects to circumstances, "Really," says he, "it is "not of me, but of your faithless mis-"tresses you should be revenged, and "I will give you the opportunity. I

"already feel, as you do, an injury, "which I shall soon share with you; "for if neither of you have been able "to fix the constancy of one, how can "I expect that I can fix them all? "Your quarrel then becomes my own. "If you will sup with me to-night at "my villa, I hope to give you your "revenge." They desired an explanation: but he answered with that tone of superiority, which the circumstances authorised him to take, "Gentlemen, "I think I have already sufficiently "shewn you, that I know how to con- "duct matters; leave every thing to "me." They all agreed; and having took leave of their new friend, separated until evening, to wait the effect of his promises.

He returned immediately to Paris, and, according to custom, waited on his new conquests; obtained a promise from each to take a tête-à-tête supper

with him at his villa. Two of them started some small difficulties, but nothing was to be refused after such a night. He made his appointments at an hour's distance from each other, to give him the time necessary for the maturing his scheme. After these preparations, he gave notice to the other conspirators, and they all impatiently expected their victims.

The first being arrived, Prevan alone received her, and with a seeming eagerness led her to the sanctuary, of which she imagined herself the goddess; then retiring on some slight pretence, was immediately replaced by the insulted lover.

You may guess the confusion. A woman who was not accustomed to adventures of this sort, rendered the triumph very easy. Every reproach that was omitted, was looked on as a favour; and the fugitive slave, again

delivered to her first master, thought herself happy in the hope of pardon on resuming her chains. The treaty of peace was ratified in a more solitary place; and the void scene was alternately replaced by the other actors in pretty much the same manner, but with the same finale.

Still each of the women thought herself *sola* in this play. Their astonishment is not to be described, when, called to supper, the three couple reunited: but their confusion was at the summit, when Prevan made his appearance, and had the barbarity to make apologies to the ladies, which, by disclosing their secrets, convinced them fully how much they had been tricked.

They sat down, however, to table, and recovering from their confusion, the men gave themselves up to mirth, and the women yielded. It is true,

their hearts were all full of rancour; but yet the conversation was nevertheless amorous; gaiety kindled desire, which brought additional charms; and this astonishing revel lasted till morning. At parting, the women had reason to think themselves forgiven: but the men, who preserved their resentment, entirely broke off the connection the next day; and not satisfied with having abandoned their fickle ladies, in revenge, published the adventure. Since, one has been shut up in a convent, and the other two are exiled to their estates in the country.

Thus you have heard Prevan's history. And now I leave you to determine whether you will add to his fame, and be yoked to his triumphal chariot. Your letter has made me really uneasy; and I wait with the utmost impatience a more explicit and prudent answer to my last.

Adieu, my lovely friend! Be diffident of whimsical or pleasing ideas, which you are rather apt to be readily seduced by. Remember, that in the course you run, wit alone is not sufficient: that one single imprudent step becomes an irremediable evil: and permit prudent friendship to sometimes guide your pleasures.

Adieu! I love you notwithstanding, as much as if you was rational.

*Sept.* 18, 17—.

## LETTER LXXX.

### Chevalier Danceny *to* Cecilia Volanges.

Cecilia, my dear Cecilia! when shall we see each other again? How shall I live without you? Where shall I find strength or resolution? No, never, never, shall I be able to bear this cruel absence. Each day adds to my misery, without the least prospect of its having an end. Valmont, who had promised me assistance and consolation; Valmont neglects, and, perhaps, forgets me. He is with his love, and no longer acquainted with the sufferings of absence. He has not wrote to me, although he forwarded me the last letter; and yet it is on him I depend to

know when and by what means I shall have the happiness to see you. He, then, can say nothing. You even do not mention a syllable about it. Surely it cannot be, that you no longer wish for it. Ah, my Cecilia! I am very unhappy. I love you more than ever: but this passion, which was the delight of my life, is now become my torment.

No, I will no longer live thus. I must see you, if it was but for a moment. When I rise, I say to myself I shall see her no more. Going to bed, I say, I have not seen her: and notwithstanding the length of the days, not a moment of happiness for me. All is grief, all is despair; and all those miseries arrive from whence I expected all my joys. You will have an idea of my situation, if you add to all this, my uneasiness on your account. I am incessantly thinking of you; and ever with grief. If I see you unhappy and

afflicted, I bear a part in your misfortunes; if I see you in tranquillity and consoled, my griefs are redoubled. Everywhere and in every circumstance am I miserable.

Ah! it was not thus when you were here; every thing was then delight: the certainty of seeing you made absence supportable. You knew how I employed my time. If I fulfilled any duties, they rendered me more worthy of you; if I cultivated any science, it was in hopes to be more pleasing to you, whenever the distractions of the world drew me from you. At the opera, I sought to discover what would please you. A concert recalled to my mind your talents, and our pleasing occupations in company. In my walks, I eagerly sought the most slight resemblance of you. I compared you to all wherever you had the advantage. Every moment of the day was distin-

guished by a new homage, and each evening laid the tribute at your feet.

What is now left me? Melancholy grief, and the slight hope which Valmont's silence diminishes, and yours converts into uneasiness. Ten leagues only separate us: and yet this short space becomes an insurmountable obstacle to me; and when I implore the assistance of my friend and of my love, both are cold and silent; far from assisting, they will not even answer me.

What, then, is become of the active friendship of Valmont? But what is become of the tender sentiments which inspired you with that readiness of finding out means of daily seeing each other? I remember, sometimes I found myself obliged to sacrifice them to considerations and to duties. What did you then not say to me? By how many pretexts did you not combat my reasons? I beg you will remember, my

Cecilia, that my reasons always gave way to your wishes. I do not pretend to make any merit of it. What you wished to obtain, I was impatient to grant; but I, in turn, now make a request; and what is that request? Only to see you a moment; to renew, to receive the assurance of eternal love. Is it not, then, any longer your happiness as well as mine? I reject this desponding idea, which is the summit of misery. You love me; yes, you will always love me. I believe it; I am sure of it; and I shall never doubt it: but my situation is dreadful, and I can no longer support it. Adieu, Cecilia!

*Sept.* 18, 17—.

## LETTER LXXXI.

*The* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL *to the* VISCOUNT DE VALMONT.

How your fears raise my compassion! How much they convince me of my superiority over you! So you want to teach me how to conduct myself! Ah, my poor Valmont! what a distance there is still between you and me! No; all the pride of your sex would not be sufficient to fill up the interval that is between us. Because you are not able to execute my schemes, you look upon them as impossible. It well becomes you, who are both proud and weak, to attempt to decide on my measures, and give your opinion of my resources. Upon my word, Viscount, your advice

has put me out of temper. I cannot conceal it.

That to hide your incredible awkwardness with your Presidente, you should display as a triumph the having disconcerted for a moment this weak woman who loves you, I am not displeased. That you should have obtained from her a look, I smile, and pass over. That feeling, in spite of you, the insignificancy of your conduct, you should hope to deceive my attention, by flattering me with the sublime effort you have made to bring together two children, who are eager to see each other, and who, I will take upon me to say, are indebted to me only for this eagerness; that I will also pass over. That, lastly, you should plume yourself on those brilliant acts, to tell me in a magisterial tone, that *it is better employ one's time in executing their projects than in relating them;* that

vanity hurts me not; I forgive it. But that you should take upon you to imagine I stand in need of your prudence; I should go astray, if I did not pay a proper regard to your advice; that I ought to sacrifice a whim, or a pleasure, to it: upon my word, Viscount, that would be raising your pride too much for the confidence which I have condescended to place in you.

What have you then done, that I have not surpassed by a million of degrees? You have seduced, ruined several women: but what difficulties had you to encounter? What obstacles to surmount? Where is the merit that may be truly called yours? A handsome figure, the effect of mere chance; a gracefulness, which custom generally gives; some wit, it's true, but which nonsense would upon occasion supply as well; a tolerable share of impudence, which is solely owing to the facility

of your first successes. Those, I believe, are all your abilities, if I am not mistaken; for as to the celebrity which you have acquired, you will not insist, I presume, that I should set any great value on the art of publishing or seizing an opportunity of scandal.

As to your prudence and cunning, I do not speak of myself, but where is the woman that has not more of it than you? Your very Presidente leads you like a babe.

Believe me, Viscount, one seldom acquires the qualities one thinks unnecessary. As you engage without danger, you should act without precaution. As for you men, your defeats are only a success the less. In this unequal struggle, our good fortune is not to be losers; and your misfortune, not to be gainers. When I would even grant you equal talents with us, how much more must we surpass you by the necessity we

are under of employing them continually?

Let us suppose, that you make use of as much address to overcome us, as we do to defend ourselves, or to surrender; you will, at least, agree with me, it becomes useless after you succeed. Entirely taken up with some new inclination, you give way to it without fear, without reserve; its duration is a matter of no consequence to you.

And really those reciprocal attachmets, given and received, to speak in the love cant, you alone have it in your power to keep or break. Happy yet do the women think themselves, when in your fickleness you prefer secrecy to scandal, or are satisfied with a mortifying abandonment, and that you do not make the idol of to-day the victim of to-morrow.

But if an unfortunate woman should first feel the weight of her chains, what

risks does she not run if she attempts to extricate herself from them, if she should dare to struggle against them? She trembling strives to put away the man her heart detests. If he persists, what was granted to love must be given to fear; her arms are open, while her heart is shut; her prudence should untie with dexterity those same bonds you would have broken. She is without resource, at the mercy of her enemy, if he is incapable of generosity, which is seldom to be met with in him; for if he is sometimes applauded for possessing it, he is never blamed for wanting it.

You will not, doubtless, deny those self-evident propositions. If, however, you have seen me disposing of opinions and events; subjecting those formidable men to my whims and fancies; taking from the one the will, and from the other the power, of annoying me. If I have discovered the secret, according

to my roving taste, to detach the one, and reject the other, those dethroned tyrants becoming my slaves; if in the midst of those frequent revolutions, my reputation has been still preserved unsullied; should you not from thence have concluded, that, born to revenge my sex and command yours, I found out means unknown to any that went before me.

Ah, keep your advice and your fears for those infatuated women, who call themselves sentimental; whose exalted imaginations would make one believe, that Nature had placed their senses in their heads; who, having never reflected, blend incessantly the lover with love; who, possessed with that ridiculous illusion, believe that he alone with whom they have sought pleasure is the sole trustee of it, and, true to enthusiasm, have the same respect and faith for the priest that is due to the Divinity only.

Reserve your fears for those who, more vain than prudent, do not know when to consent or break off.

But tremble for those active, yet idle women, whom you call *sentimental*, on whom love so easily and powerfully takes possession; who feel the necessity of being taken up with it, even when they don't enjoy it; and, giving themselves up without reserve to the fermentation of their ideas, bring forth those soft but dangerous letters, and do not dread confiding in the object that causes them these proofs of their weakness; imprudent creatures! who in their actual lover cannot see their future enemy.

But what have I to do in common with those inconsiderate women? When have you seen me depart from the rules I have laid down to myself, and abandon my own principles? I say, my own principles, and I speak it with energy, for

they are not like those of other women, dealt out by chance, received without scrutiny, and followed through custom; they are the proofs of my profound reflections; I have given them existence, and I can call them my own work.

Introduced into the world whilst yet a girl, I was devoted by my situation to silence and inaction; this time I made use of for reflection and observation. Looked upon as thoughtless and heedless, paying little attention to the discourses that were held out to me, I carefully laid up those that were meant to be concealed from me.

This useful curiosity served me in the double capacity of instruction and dissimulation. Being often obliged to hide the objects of my attention from the eyes of those who surrounded me, I endeavoured to guide my own at my will. I then learnt to take up at pleasure that dissipated air which you have

so often praised. Encouraged by those first successes, I endeavoured to regulate in the same manner the different motions of my person. Did I feel any chagrin, I endeavoured to put on an air of serenity, and even an affected chearfulness; carried my zeal so far, that I used to put myself to voluntary pain; and tried my temper, by seeming to express a satisfaction; laboured with the same care and trouble to repress the sudden tumult of unexpected joy. It is thus that I gained that ascendancy over my countenance which has so often astonished you.

I was yet very young and unconcerned, but still reflected. My thoughts were my own, and I was exasperated to have them either surprised or drawn from me against my will. Provided with such arms, I immediately began to try their utility. Not satisfied with the closeness of my character, I amused

myself with assuming different ones. Confident of my actions, I studied my words; I regulated the one and the other according to circumstances, and sometimes according to whim. From that moment I became selfish; and no longer showed any desire, but what I thought useful to me.

This labour had so far fixed my attention on the characters of the physiognomy, and the expression of the countenance, that I acquired the penetrating glance, which experience, however, has taught me not to place an entire confidence in, but which has so seldom deceived me.

I had scarce attained my fifteenth year, when I was mistress of those talents to which the greatest part of our female politicians owe their reputation, and had only attained the first rudiments of the science I was so anxious to acquire.

You may well imagine, that like all

other young girls, I wanted to be acquainted with love and pleasure: but never having been in a convent, having no confidant, and being moreover strictly watched by a vigilant mother, I had only vague ideas. Nature even, which certainly I have had since every reason to be satisfied with, had not yet given me any indication. I may say, she silently wrought to perfect her work. My head alone fermented. I did not wish for enjoyment; I wanted knowledge: my strong propensity for instruction suggested the means.

I was sensible, the only man I could apply to on this occasion without danger was my confessor. As soon as I was determined, I got the better of my bashfulness. I accused myself of a fault I had not committed, and declared I had done *all that women do*. Those were the exact words: but when I spoke thus, I really had no idea of

what I expressed. My expectations were neither entirely satisfied, nor altogether disappointed; the dread of discovering myself prevented my information: but the good father made the crime so heinous, that I concluded the pleasure must be excessive; and the desire of tasting it succeeded that of knowing it.

I don't know how far this desire might have carried me; being then totally unexperienced, the first opportunity would have probably ruined me: but fortunately a few days after my mother informed me that I was to be married. Immediately the certainty of coming to the knowledge of every thing stifled my curiosity, and I came a virgin to Mr. de Merteuil's arms.

I waited with unconcern the period that was to resolve my doubts; and I had occasion for reflection, to assume a little fear and embarrasment. This

first night, which generally fills the mind with so much joy or apprehension, offered me only an opportunity of experience, pleasure, and pain. I observed every thing with the utmost exactitude, and those different sensations furnished matter for reflection.

This kind of study soon began to be pleasing: but faithful to my principles, and knowing, as it were, by instinct, that no one ought to be less in my confidence than my husband, I determined, for no other reason than because I had my feeling, to appear to him impassible. This affected coldness laid the foundation for that blind confidence which he ever after placed in me: and in consequence of more reflection, I threw in an air of dissipation over my behaviour, to which my youth gave a sanction; and I never appeared more childish than when I praised him most profusely.

Yet, I must own, at first I suffered myself to be hurried away by the bustle of the world, and gave myself up entirely to its most trifling dissipations. After a few months M. de Merteuil having brought me to his dreary country house, to avoid the dulness of a rural life, I again resumed my studies; and being surrounded by people whose inferiority sheltered me from suspicion, I gave myself a loose in order to improve my experience. It was then I was ascertained that love, which is represented as the first cause of all our pleasure, is at most but the pretence.

M. de Merteuil's sickness interrupted those pleasing occupations. I was obliged to accompany him to town, where he went for advice. He died a short time after, as you know; and though, to take all in all, I had no reason to complain of him, nevertheless I was very sensibly affected with

the liberty my widowhood gave me, which had so pleasing a prospect.

My mother imagined that I would go into a convent, or would go back to live with her: I refused both one and the other: the only sacrifice I made to decency was to return to the country, where I had yet some observations to make.

I strengthened them by reading, but don't imagine that it was all of that kind you suppose: I studied my morals in romances, my opinions amongst the philosophers, and even sought amongst our most severe moralists, what was required of us.—Thus I was ascertained of what one might do, how one ought to think, and the character one should assume. Thus fixed on those three objects, the last only offered some difficulties in the execution: I hoped to conquer them; I ruminated on the means.

I began to be disgusted with my rustic pleasures; they were not sufficiently variegated for my active mind, and felt the necessity of coquetry to reconcile me to love; not really to be sensible of it, but to feign it, and inspire it in others. In vain I have been told, and had read, that this passion was not to be feigned. I saw clearly, that to acquire it, it was sufficient to blend the spirit of an author with the talent of a comedian. I practised those two characters, and perhaps with some success; but, instead of courting the vain applause of the theatre, I determined to turn what so many others sacrificed to vanity, to my own happiness.

A year was spent in those different employments. My mourning being expired, I returned to town with my grand projects, but did not expect the first obstacle which fell in my way.

The austere retreat and long solitude

I had been accustomed to, had given me such an air of prudery as frightened our prettiest fellows, and left me a prey to a crowd of tiresome gallants, who all made pretensions to my person; the difficulty was, not to refuse them; but several of those refusals were not agreeable to my family: I lost in those domestic broils the time which I flattered myself to make so charming a use. I was obliged then to recal the one, and disperse the others, to be guilty of some frivolities, and to take the same pains to hurt my reputation that I had taken to preserve it. In this I easily succeeded, as you may very well imagine; but, not being swayed by any passion, I only did what I judged necessary, and dealt out prudently some little acts of volatility.

As soon as I had accomplished my aim, I stopped short, gave the credit of my reformation to some women, who

not having any pretensions to beauty or attractions, wrapt themselves up in merit and virtue. This resolution was of great importance, and turned out better than I could have expected; those grateful duennas became my apologists, and their blind zeal for what they called their own work, was carried to such a length, that upon the least conversation that was held about me, the whole prude party exclaimed shame and scandal! The same means acquired me also the good opinion of our women of talents, who, convinced that I did not pursue the same objects they did, chose me for the subject of their praise, whenever they asserted they did not scandalize every body.

However, my former conduct brought back the lovers; to keep the balance even between them and my new female friends, I exhibited myself

as a woman not averse to love, but difficult, and whom the excess of delicacy rendered superior to love.

Then I began to display upon the grand theatre the talents I had acquired: my first care was to acquire the name of invincible; in order to obtain it, the men who were not pleasing to me were the only ones whose addresses I seemed to accept. I employed them usefully in procuring me the honours of resistance, whilst I gave myself up without dread to the favoured lover; but my assumed timidity never permitted him to appear with me in public company, whose attention was always thus drawn off to the unfortunate lover.

You know how expeditious I am in my decisions; this proceeds from my observation, that it is always the preparatory steps which betray women's secrets. Let one do what they will,

the *ton* is never the same before as after success. This difference does not escape the attentive observer; and I have found it always less dangerous to be mistaken in my choice, than to suffer myself to be seen through; I moreover gain by this conduct, to remove probabilities on which only a judgment may be formed.

Those precautions, and that of never corresponding, to give any proof of my defeat, may appear satisfactory; however, I never thought them sufficient. Examining my own heart, I studied that of others; then I found; there is no person whatever who has not a secret that it is important should not be revealed; an established truth of which antiquity seems to have been more sensible than we are, and of which, perhaps, the history of Samson may have been an ingenious emblem. Like another Dalilah, I always em-

ployed my power in discovering this important secret. Ah! how many of our modern Samsons do I not hold by the hair under my scissars! Those I have no dread of; they are the only ones that I sometimes take a pleasure in mortifying. More pliant with others, I endeavour to render them fickle, to avoid appearing inconstant myself. A feigned friendship, an apparent confidence, some generous dealings, the flattering idea that each was possessed with, of being my only lover, has secured discretion; in short, when all those means have failed, I have known how to stifle beforehand, (foreseeing my rapture), under the cloak of ridicule and calumny, the credit those dangerous men might obtain.

What I now tell you, you have often seen me put in practice; and yet you call my prudence in question! Don't you recollect, when you first began

your courtship to me? I never was more flattered; I sighed for you before I saw you. Captivated by your reputation, you seemed to be wanting to my glory; I burned with the desire of encountering you face to face; it was the only one of my inclinations that ever took a moment's ascendancy over me; yet, had you been inclined to ruin me, what means had you in your power? Idle conversations that leave no traces after them, that your reputation even would have rendered suspicious, and a set of facts without probability, the sincere recital of which would have had the appearance of a romance badly assimilated. It is true, you have since been in possession of all my secrets; but you are sensible how our interests are united, and which of us two ought to be taxed with imprudence.*

* Hereafter will be seen, in the 152d Letter, not Mr. de Valmont's secret, but pretty nearly

Since I am in the humour of giving you an account of myself, I will do it with the utmost exactitude.—I think I hear you say I'm at least at the mercy of my chambermaid! Truly, if she is not in the secret of my sentiments, she is at least in that of my actions. When you spoke to me on this subject formerly, I only answered you, I was sure of her; the proof this answer was then sufficient to make you easy, is, you have since confided in her, and for your own account; but now Prevan gives you umbrage, that your head is turned, I doubt much you'll not take my word: you must, then, be edified.

First, this girl is my foster-sister; this tie, which appears nothing to us, has a great influence with people of

of what kind it was; and the reader will perceive, that we could throw no more light on that subject.

her condition: moreover, I am in possession of her secrets; she is the victim of a love intrigue, and would have been ruined if I had not saved her. Her parents, armed at all points with sentiments of honour, wanted to have her shut up: they applied to me about it; I instantly saw how useful their resentment might be to me, and seconded their intentions; solicited the order from court, which I obtained; then suddenly, preferring clemency, brought her parents round, employing my credit with the old minister of state, and prevailed on them to depute me the trustee in this business, to stop or demand the execution of it, according as I should think the behaviour of the girl would deserve. She knows, then, her fate rests in my hands; and if, which is impossible, those powerful motives would not prevent, is it not evident, that her conduct being laid

open, and her punishment authenticated, it would soon wipe away all credit to her tale?

Add to all these precautions, which I call fundamental ones, a thousand others, either local or eventual, that reflection and habitude would produce, if needful, the detail of which would be too minute, but the practice very important, and which you must take the trouble to collect in the whole of my conduct, if you want to arrive at the knowledge of them.

But to pretend that I, who have taken so much pains, should not receive any benefit, after having raised myself so much above other women by my assiduous labours;—that I should consent to creep, like them, between imprudence and timidity; but, above all, I should dread a man so far as to find my salvation only in flight. No, Viscount; I must conquer or perish,

As to Prevan, I must and will have him. He will tell, you say: but he shall not tell. This, in a few words, is our romance.

*Sept. 20, 17—.*

---

## LETTER LXXXII.

CECILIA VOLANGES *to the* CHEVALIER DANCENY.

MY God! what trouble your letter gives me! I had great reason, to be sure, to be impatient to receive it. I expected to have received some consolation, and am now more afflicted than ever. I could not help crying when I read it. But that is not what I reproach you with; for I have often

cried already upon your account, without giving me so much trouble: but now the case is altered.

What is it, then, you mean to say? That your love is now a torment to you; that you can't live any longer thus, nor bear to be so circumstanced? What! will you cease loving me, because it is not quite so easy to see me as formerly? Don't think I am happier than you; on the contrary: but I love you the more notwithstanding. If Mr. de Valmont has not wrote to you, it is not my fault. I could not prevail on him; because I have never been alone with him; we have agreed never to speak to one another before company; and all upon your account, that he may the sooner do what you would have him. I don't say, but what I wish it as well as you; and you ought to be very sure of it: but what would you have me do? If you think

it is so easy, find out the way; it is what I wish for as much as you do.

Do you think it so pleasing to be scolded every day by mamma? She who before never said any thing to me, now it is worse than if I was in a convent. I used to be consoled thinking it was for you; even sometimes, I was very glad of it. Now I perceive you are vexed without my giving any occasion for it. I am more melancholy than for any thing that has happened till now.

Nothing can be more difficult than to receive your letters; so that if Mr. de Valmont was not so complaisant and dexterous as he is, I should not know what to do; and it is still more difficult to write to you. In the morning I dare not, because my mamma is always near me, and comes every moment into my chamber. Sometimes I can do it in the afternoon, under pre-

tence of singing or playing on the harp. I must stop at the end of every line, that they may hear me play. Fortunately my chambermaid falls asleep sometimes at night, and I tell her I can go to bed very well alone; that she may go, and leave me the candle; I am sometimes obliged to hide behind the curtain, that no one may see the light, and listen; for, on the least noise, I hide every thing in my bed, lest any one should come. I wish you were only here to see: you would be convinced one must have a great affection to do all this. In short, you may depend I do every thing in my power.

I can't help telling you I love you, and will always love you. I never told you so with more sincerity, yet you are angry. You assure me, however, before I told you so, that it would be enough to make you happy;

you can't deny it, for it is in your letters: although I have them no longer, I remember it as well as when I used to read them every day; and because we are now absent, you have altered your mind; but this absence will not last for ever, perhaps. Good God! how unhappy I am; and you are the cause of it all.

Now I think of it, about your letters; I hope you have kept all those that mamma took from me, and that she sent you back. Surely the time will come, when I shan't be so closely watched as I am at present, and you will give them to me again. How happy shall I be, when I can keep them always, without any one prying into them.—Now, I return them back to Mr. de Valmont, as it would otherwise be running too great a risk, and yet I never return any but it gives me a great deal of trouble.

Adieu, my dear friend! I love you with all my heart, and I will love you all my life. I hope now you will not be vexed any more; if I was sure of it, I would not be so myself. Write to me as soon as you can, for I find that until then I shall be always uneasy.

*From the Castle of ——,*
*Sept.* 21, 17—.

---

## LETTER LXXXIII.

### Viscount de Valmont, *to the* Presidente de Tourvel.

For heaven's sake, Madam, let us renew the conversation so unfortunately interrupted, that I may convince you how different I am from the odious

picture that has been drawn of me, and may, at least, enjoy that amiable confidence you placed in me. How many charms do you not add to virtue! How you embellish and make us cherish virtuous sentiments! It is there you are truly enchanting; that is the strongest of all seductions; it is the only one which is truly respectable and powerful.

It is enough to see you, to wish to please you; and to converse with you, to augment this wish: but he that has the happiness to know you, who can sometimes read your mind, soon gives way to a more noble enthusiasm, and, struck with veneration as with love— in your person adores the image of all the virtues. Formed, perhaps, more than any other, to cherish and admire them, but led away by some errors that had fatally drawn me from virtue, it is you have brought me back, who have

again made me feel all its charms. Would you impute, then, to criminality this new affection? Will you blame your own work? Would you reproach yourself the interest you ought to take in it?—How can you dread so virtuous a sentiment, and what happiness can be greater than to experience it?

My affection frightens you. You think it too violent, too immoderate; qualify it, then, by a softer passion. Do not reject the obedience I offer you, which I now swear never to withdraw myself from, and in which I shall be ever virtuously employed. What sacrifice would be painful when your heart could dispense the reward? Where is the man so unthinking as not to know how to enjoy the privations he imposes on himself; who would not prefer a word or a look which should be granted him, to all the enjoyments he could steal or surprise? And yet

you have believed me to be such a man, and have dreaded me. Ah! why is not your happiness dependent on me? How pleasingly should I be avenged in making you happy! But the influence of barren friendship will not produce it; it is love alone can realize it.

This word alarms you; and, pray, why? A tender attachment, a stronger union, congenial thoughts, the same happiness as the same sorrows; what is there in this that is foreign to you? Yet such is love; such is, at least, the passion you have inspired, and which I feel. It is it that calculates without interest, and rates the actions according to their merit, and not their value, the inexhaustible treasure of sensitive souls; every thing becomes precious formed for it or by it.

Those striking truths, so easy to put in practice, what have they in them frightful? What fears can a man of

sensibility occasion you, to whom love will never permit any other happiness than yours. It is now the only vow I make. I would sacrifice every thing to fulfil it, except the sentiment it inspires, which, if you even consent to admit, you shall regulate at will. But let us not suffer it to part us, when it ought to reunite us, if the friendship you have offered me is not a futile word. If, as you told me yesterday, it is the softest sentiment your soul is capable of, let it stipulate between us; I shall not challenge its decree: but in erecting it the judge of love, let it, at least, consent to hear its defence. To refuse to admit it would be unjust, which is not the characteristic of friendship.

A second conversation will not be attended with more inconvenience than the first; chance may furnish the opportunity; you might even appoint the

time. I will readily believe I am wrong: but would you not rather recal me by reason, than to combat my opinion? And do you doubt my docility? If I had not been interrupted, perhaps I had already been brought over to your opinion; for your power over me knows no bounds.

I will acknowledge, that this invincible power to which I have surrendered, without daring to examine the irresistible charm that gives you the ascendancy over my thoughts and actions, often alarms me; and, perhaps, this conversation that I now solicit may be formidable to me. Perhaps, after being bound down by my promises, I shall see myself reduced to consume with a flame which I well feel can never be extinguished, without even daring to implore your assistance. Ah! for heaven's sake, Madam, do not abuse your power over me: but if it will

make you happier, if I shall appear more worthy of you, how much will my pains be softened by those consoling ideas! Yes, I feel it. Again to converse with you, is furnishing you with stronger arms against me: it is submitting myself entirely to your will. It is easier to make a defence against your letters; it is true, they are your sentiments: but you are not present to give them their full force; yet the pleasure of hearing you induces me to defy the danger; at least, I shall have the happiness of thinking I have done every thing for you even against myself, and my sacrifices will become a homage; too happy, in being able to convince you in a thousand shapes, as I feel it, in a thousand ways, that without self-exception, you are, and always will be, the dearest object of my heart.

*Sept.* 23, 17—.

## LETTER LXXXIV.

### VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to* CECILIA VOLANGES.

You saw how we were disappointed yesterday. I could not find an opportunity to deliver you the letter I had the whole day; and I don't know whether I shall be more successful this day. I am afraid of hurting you by my over zeal; and should never forgive myself, if by my imprudence you should suffer; that would make my friend distracted, and you miserable. Yet I am not insensible to a lover's impatience. I feel how painful it is in your situation to experience delay in the only consolation you are capable of receiving at this time. By dint of thinking on means to

remove obstacles, I have found one that will be pretty easy if you will but give your assistance.

I think I remarked, the key of your chamber door, that opens into the gallery, hangs always upon your mamma's chimney-piece. Every thing would become easy, if we were once in posssession of that key; but if it is not practicable, I can procure another exactly similar, which will answer the purpose: it will be sufficient I should have the key for an hour or two. You can easily find an opportunity of taking it; and that it may not be missed, you have one belonging to me, which resembles it pretty much, and the difference won't be perceived unless it is tried, which I don't think will be attempted. You must only take care to tie a blue ribband to it, like the one that is to your own.

You must endeavour to get this key

to-morrow or the next day at breakfast, because it will he then easier to give it me, and it may be put in its place again in the evening, which would be the time your mamma might take notice of it. I can return it to you at dinner, if we act properly.

You know, when we go from the saloon to the dining room, Madame de Rosemonde always comes last; I will give her my hand; and all you have to do will be to quit your tapestry frame slowly, or let something fall, so that you make stay a little behind; then you will be able to take the key, which I will hold behind me: but you must not neglect, as soon as you have taken it, to join my old aunt, and make her some compliments. If you should accidentally let the key fall, don't be disconcerted; I will pretend it is myself, and I'll answer for all.

The small confidence your mamma

shews you, and the moroseness of her behaviour, authorises this little deceit: but it is, moreover, the only means to continue to receive Danceny's letters, and to send him yours. Every other is too dangerous, and might irretrievably ruin you both; and my prudent friendship would reproach me for ever, if I was to attempt any other.

When I am once master of the key, there will be still some other precautions to be taken against the noise the door and lock may make, but them are easily removed. You will find, under the same clothes-press where I left your paper some oil and a feather. You sometimes go into your room alone, and you must take that opportunity to oil the lock and the hinges; the only thing you have to take care of is, that no drops may fall on the floor, which might discover you. You must also take care to wait till night comes,

because if you manage this business dexterously, as I know you are capable of, nothing will appear in the morning.

If, however, any thing should be perceived, don't hesitate to say it was the servant that rubs the furniture; in that case, perhaps, it would be necessary to tell the time and the conversation that passed: as, that he takes this precaution against rust for all the locks that are not constantly used; for you must be sensible it would not be very probable that you should be a witness of it without asking the reason. Those are little details that aid probability, and probability makes lies of no consequence; as it takes away all curiosity to verify them.

After you have read this letter once, I beg you to read it again, and imprint it well in your memory; for first one must understand well what one has to do, and then, again, that you should

be certain I have omitted nothing. As I am little used to employ artifice or cunning for my own occasion, nothing but the strong friendship that I have for Danceny, and my compassion for you, could determine me to make use of those innocent methods. I hate every thing that has the appearance of deceit; that is my character: but your misfortunes so sensibly affect me, I would attempt every thing to soften them.

You may believe, when once this communication is established between us, it will be much easier for me to procure you a meeting with Danceny, which he has so much at heart; but yet don't mention all this to him, as it would only increase his impatience, and the time is not entirely come to satisfy it. You ought rather, I think, to calm than to irritate it; but that I leave to your own delicacy. Adieu, my pretty pupil; for now you are my pupil;

Love your tutor a little: but, above all, be very tractable, and you will find the benefit of it. I am employed in endeavouring to make you happy; which, I promise you, will add much to my own.

*Sept.* 24, 17—.

---

## LETTER LXXXV.

### Marchioness de Merteuil *to* Viscount de Valmont.

At length you will be satisfied, and do me justice; no longer blend me with the rest of womankind: I have at last put an end to my adventure with Prevan, and you shall judge which of the two has a right to boast. The recital will not be so amusing as the action;

neither would it be just, whilst you have done nothing but argue well or ill on this matter, you should enjoy as much pleasure as me, who employed my time and care in this business.

But if you have any great affair in hand, any enterprise wherein this dangerous rival is your competitor, return; he has left you a clear stage, at least for some time; and perhaps will never recover the blow I have given him.

What a happy man you are, to have me for a friend! I am your good genius. You languish in absence from the beauty that possesses your heart; I speak the word, and instantly you are with her: you wish to be revenged of a mischievous woman: I point out the place where you are to strike, and deliver her up to you: again, to set aside a formidable competitor, you still invoke me, and I grant your petition. Upon my word, if you don't employ

the remainder of your days in demonstrating your gratitude, you are a base man: but to return to my adventure, and its origin. The rendezvous given out so loud at coming out of the opera * was heard, as I expected. Prevan was there, and when the Marechale told him obligingly, that she was happy to see him, twice running, on her public day, he took care to reply, that since Tuesday he had got rid of a thousand appointments, to have it in his power to wait upon her this evening; *a word to the wise* : however, as I was determined to be certain whether or not I was the true object of this flattering eagerness, I was determined to oblige my new admirer, to make a choice between me and his reigning passion. I declared I would not play, and he made a thousand pretences not to play:

* See Letter the 74th.

thus my first triumph was over Lansquenet.

I engrossed the bishop of —— for my conversation; chose him on account of his relationship with the hero of the adventure, for whom I wished to smooth the way to make his approaches: was, moreover, glad to have a respectable witness, who could upon occasion answer for my conduct and conversation: this arrangement succeeded.

After the customary vague chat, Prevan having soon made himself master of the conversation, engaged, upon different subjects, to endeavour to find out that which was most agreeable to me. The sentimental I rejected, as not worthy of credit. I stopped, by my serious air, his gaiety, which seemed too volatile for an opening: then he returned to delicate friendship; and this was the subject that engaged us.

The bishop did not come down to supper; Prevan gave me his hand, and consequently placed himself at table by me: I must be just; he kept up our private conversation with great address, as if he was only taken up with the general conversation, to which he seemed all attention. At the dessert, a new piece was mentioned that was to be played the Monday following at the French Comedy.—I expressed some regret at not being provided with a box; he offered me his, which I refused, as usual: to which he replied, with great good humour, that I did not understand him, for, certainly, he would not offer his lodge to a person he did not know; he only meant to inform me that Madame la Marechale had the disposal of it; she acquiesced to this piece of humour, and I accepted the invitation. Being returned to the saloon, he begged, as you may suppose,

a seat in this box; and as the Marechale, who treats him very familiarly, promised it to him if he behaved himself well, he took the opportunity of one of those double entendre conversations, for which you so profusely praise him, and throwing himself at her knees as a naughty child, under pretence of begging her advice and opinion, he said a great many tender and flattering things, which it was easy for me to apply to myself. Many of the company not having returned to play after supper, the conversation became more general and less interesting, but our eyes spoke a great deal—I should say his, for mine had one language only, that of surprise; he must have imagined that I was astonished, and amazingly taken up with the prodigious impression he had made on me. I believe I left him pretty well satisfied; and I was no less contented myself.

The Monday following I went to the French Comedy, as was agreed: notwithstanding your literary curiosity, I cannot give you any account of the representation, and can only tell you, that Prevan has an admirable talent for flattery, and that the piece was hooted. I was somewhat troubled to see an evening so near an end, from which I promis'd myself so much pleasure, and, in order to prolong it, I requested the Marechale to sup with me, which gave me an opportunity to invite the lovely flatterer; he only begged time to disengage himself with the Countesses de P——.* This name raised my indignation; I saw plainly he was beginning to make them his confidants; I called to mind your prudent advice, and determined —— to pursue the adventure, as I was certain it would

* See Letter the 70th.

cure him of this dangerous indiscretion.

Being a stranger in my company, which was that night very small, he paid me the usual compliments, and when we went to supper, offered me his hand—I was wicked enough, when I accepted it, to affect a light tremor, and, as I walked, to cast my eyes downwards, accompanied with a difficulty of respiration—assumed the appearance of foreseeing my defeat, and to dread my conqueror; he instantly remarked it, and the traitor immediately changed his tone and behaviour: he was polite before, but now became all tenderness;—not but the conversation was pretty much the same,—the circumstances required it; but his look was not so lively, yet more flattering; the tone of his voice was softer; his smile was not that of art but satisfaction; and his discourse gradually falling from

his sallies, wit gave way to delicacy. Pray, good Sir, what could you have done more?

On my side, I began to grow thoughtful to such a degree that it was taken notice of; and when I was reproached with it, I had the address to defend myself so awkwardly, and to cast a quick, timid, and disconcerted glance at Prevan, to make him imagine that all my fear was lest he should guess at the cause of my confusion.

After supper, I took the opportunity, whilst the good Marechale was telling one of those stories she had repeated a hundred times before, to place myself upon my sofa, in that kind of lassitude which a tender reverie brings on. I was not sorry Prevan should see me thus; and he really did me the honour of a most particular attention. You may very well imagine my timid eyes did not dare lift themselves up to my

conqueror, but being directed towards him in a more humble manner, they soon informed me I had obtained my end: but still it was necessary to persuade him I also shared it, and as the Marechale said it was time to retire, I exclaimed in a soft and tender tone, "Oh, good God, I was so happy "there!" However, I rose; but before we parted, I asked her how she intended to dispose of herself, to have an opportunity of saying, I intended to stay at home the day after to-morrow; on which we all parted.

Then I sat down to reflect; I had no doubt but Prevan would improve the kind of rendezvous I had just given, that he would come time enough to find me alone, and the attack would be carried on with spirit; but I was certain that, reputation apart, he would not behave with that kind of familiarity which no well-bred person ever

permits himself, only with intriguing or unexperienced women; and I did not doubt of my success, if he once let slip the word love, or if he even made any pretension to draw it from me.

How convenient it is to be connected with you men of principle! Sometimes the quarrels of lovers disconcert through timidity, or embarass by its violent transports; it is a kind of fever which has its hot and cold fits, and sometimes varies its symptoms; but your regular progressions are easily seen through; the first salutation, the deportment, the *ton*, the conversation, I knew all the evening before: I shall not, then, give you an account of the conversation, which you will readily conceive; only observe, that in my feigned defence I helped him all in my power; embarrassments to give him time to speak, bad arguments to be discussed, fears and diffidence to bring

on protestations, the perpetual requisition from him, *I beg but one word*; that silence on my part which only seemed to make him wish for it more; and besides all this a hand often squeezed, always drawn back, and never refused; thus a whole day would have passed, and we should have passed another in this frivolity, perhaps would have been still engaged in the same, if we had not heard a coach coming into my court. This happy mischance made his solicitations more pressing, and when I found myself safe from all surprise, after having breathed a long sigh, I granted the precious word. Soon after company came in.

Prevan requested to visit me the morning following, to which I consented; being careful of myself, I ordered my waiting maid to stay during the whole time of this visit in my bed chamber, from whence you know, one

may see every thing that passes in my dressing room. Our conversation was easy, and both having the same desires, we were soon agreed; it was necessary to get rid of this troublesome spectator; that was where I waited for him.

Then giving him an account of my domestic life, I easily persuaded him we should never find a favourable opportunity, and he must look upon it a kind of miracle that which he had yesterday, and was attended with such dangerous consequences as might expose me, as there was every instant company coming into the saloon. I did not fail to add, those were long established customs in my family, which, until then, had never been varied, and at the same time insisted on the impossibility of altering them, as they would expose me to the reflections of my servants. He endeavoured to affect grief, to be out of humour, to

tell me I had very little love: you may guess what an impression that made on me. Being determined to strike the decisive blow, I called tears to my assistance. It was the real scene in Zara, *You weep*. The ascendant he thought he had gained over me, and the hope he conceived of ruining me in his own way, supplied him with all the love of Orosmane.

This theatrical scene being over, we returned to the settling our measures. No probability of success in the day, our thoughts were taken up with the night; but my porter was an insurmountable obstacle, and I could not agree to any attempt to corrupt him: he then proposed the small door of my garden; that I had foreseen. I pretended a dog there, that was quiet and silent in the day-time, but a mere devil at night. The facility with which I gave into all his schemes

served to encourage him, and he soon proposed the most ridiculous expedient, which was the one I accepted.

First, he assured me his domestic was as secret as himself; there he did not deceive me, for one was as secret as the other: I was to give a public supper, he would be of the party, would take his opportunity to slip out alone, his dextrous confidant would call his carriage, open the door, and he, instead of getting in, would slip aside; thus, having disappeared to every body, yet being in my house, the question was, how he should get into my apartment? I must own, that at first my embarrassment was to find out reasons against the project, to have the appearance of destroying it. He answered them by proofs; nothing was more common than this method, he had often made use of it; it was even the one he

practised most, as being the least dangerous.

Being convinced by those unanswerable authorities, I candidly owned I had a back-stairs that led very near to my private closet; I could leave the key in the door, and he possibly might shut himself up in it, to wait there without any danger till my women were retired; then, to give more probability to my consent, the moment afterwards I refused, then again consented, only upon condition of the most perfect submission and good behaviour. To sum up all, I wanted to prove my affection, but not to satisfy his.

His departure in the morning, which I had forgot to mention, was settled to be through the little gate in the garden; as he was to go off by day-light, the Cerberus would not speak a word; not a soul passed at that hour, and my

people were all to be in a profound sleep. If you are astonished at this heap of nonsense, you must forget our situation: what business had we for better arguments? All that he required was, that the business should be known, and I was very certain it never should: the day after was fixed for the execution.

Observe, here is an affair settled, and no one has ever yet seen Prevan in my company; he offers his box for a new piece, I accept of a place in it; I invite this woman to supper during the performance, in Prevan's presence; I can scarcely dispense proposing to him to make one; he accepts my offer; two days afterwards makes me a ceremonial visit;—he comes, it is true, to visit me the day following, in the morning; but besides, as the morning visits are no longer exceptionable, it

belongs to me to judge of this, and I account it trifling.

The fatal day being come, the day on which I was to lose my virtue and reputation, I gave my instructions to my faithful Victoire, and she executed them to admiration.

When evening came, I had a good deal of company; Prevan was announced; I received him with singular politeness, a proof of my slender acquaintance with him; I placed him with the Marechale's party, as it was in her company I had first been acquainted with him: the evening produced nothing but a little note which the discreet lover found means to convey to me, and was burned, according to custom: he informed me, I might depend upon him; it was embellished with all the parasitical phrases of love, happiness, &c. which are never wanting upon such occasions.

At midnight, the parties being all finished, I proposed a short macedoine.* In this project I first had in view to favour Prevan's evasion, and at the same time to make it remarkable, which could not fail to happen, considering his reputation as a gamester; I was also glad, if there should hereafter be occasion, it might be remembered I was left alone. The game lasted longer than I had imagined; the devil tempted me; I gave way to my desire, to console the impatient prisoner. I was thus proceeding to my ruin, when I reflected, if I once surrendered, I should abandon the power of keeping him within the necessary bounds of decency for my pro-

* Several persons, perhaps, do not know that a macedoine is a collection of games at hazard, in which each person who cuts the cards has a right to choose when he holds the hand: it is one of the inventions of the age.

jects: I had strength enough to resist, and returned not in a very good humour to my place at this abominable game; at last it was finished, and every one departed: I rung for my women, undressed myself expeditiously, and sent them away.

Only think now, Viscount, you see me in my light robe, approaching with a circumspect timid pace, and trembling hand, opening the door to my conqueror. The moment he perceived me, he flew like lightning. What shall I say? I was overcome, totally overcome, before I could speak a word to stop him or defend myself. Afterwards he wanted to take a more commodious situation, and more adapted to our circumstances. He cursed his dress as an obstacle to his complete bliss. He would engage with equal arms; but my extreme timidity opposed his desire, and my tender caresses did not

give him time. He was employed in other matters.

His rights were doubled; his pretensions revived: then "Harkee," said I, "so far you have a tolerable "pretty story for the two Countesses "de P——, and a thousand others: "but I have a great curiosity to know "how you will relate the end of this "adventure." Then ringing with all my strength, I had my turn, my action was quicker than his speech. He scarcely stammered out a few words, when I heard Victoire calling all my people that she had kept together in her apartment, as I had ordered her; then assuming the tone of a queen, and raising my voice, "Walk out, Sir," said I, "and never dare appear again "in my presence." On which all my servants crowded in.

Poor Prevan was distracted, and imagined murder was intended, when

in reality it was nothing but a joke, seized his sword; he was mistaken, for my valet-de-chambre, a resolute lusty fellow, grasped him round the body, and soon brought him down. I own, I was very much terrified, ordered them not to use him ill, but let him retire quietly, only to take care he was put out of the house. My servants obeyed my orders: there was a great bustle among them; they were enraged to the highest degree, any one should dare to insult *their virtuous mistress*; they all accompanied the unfortunate Chevalier, with all the noise and scandal I could wish. Victoire alone remained with me, and we repaired the disorder the bed had suffered.

My people returned tumultuously, and I, *still in great emotion*, desired to know by what good fortune they happened to be all up. Victoire said, she had given a supper to two of her

friends; that they had sat up in her apartment; and, in short, every thing as had been agreed on. I thanked them all, desired them to retire, directing one of them to go immediately for my physician. I thought I was authorised to guard against the effects of this *dreadful shock;* this was the surest means to give it currency, as well as celebrity.

He came, pitied me much, and prescribed repose. I moreover ordered Victoire to go about the neighbourhood in the morning early to spread the news.

Every thing succeeded so well, that before noon, as soon as my doors were open, my devout neighbour was at my bed's head, to know the truth and the circumstances of this horrible adventure. I was obliged to lament with her a whole hour the corruption of the age. Soon after, I received the enclos-

ed note from the Marechale, and before five, to my great astonishment, M—— * waited on me, to make his excuses, as he said, that an officer of his corps should be guilty of such an offence. He was informed of it at dinner at the Marechale's, and immediately sent an order to Prevan, putting him under arrest. I requested he might be forgiven, which he refused. I thought, as an accomplice, I should also be punished, and kept within doors; I ordered my gate to be shut, and to let every one know I was indisposed.

It is to this solitude you are indebted for so long a letter. I shall write one to Madame de Volanges, which she will certainly read publicly, where you will see this transaction as it must be related.

* The commandant of the corps in which *Prevan* served.

I forgot to tell you, that Bellroche is outrageous, and absolutely determined to fight Prevan. Poor fellow! But I shall have time to cool his brain. In the mean time, I will go to repose my own, which is much fatigued by writing. Adieu, Viscount!

*Sept.* 25, 17—.

---

## LETTER LXXXVI.

*The* Marechale de —— *to the* Marchioness de Merteuil.

(*Enclosed in the former.*)

My good God! what is this I learn, my dear Madam? Is it possible that little Prevan should be guilty of such an abominable action to you! What

is one not exposed to! We can be no longer safe in our own houses! Upon my word, these events are a consolation to age; I shall never forgive myself, as I have been partly the cause of your receiving such a monster into your house; I assure you, if what I hear is true, he shall never more set foot in mine: it is what every one must do that has any sentiments of honour, if they act properly.

I have been informed you was very ill, and have been very uneasy about your state of health; I beg you will let me hear from you; or, if you are not able to write, pray let one of your women inform me how you are. A word will be sufficient to relieve my anxiety. I should have been with you this morning; but my doctor will not allow me to miss a day from my bath.

I must go this morning to Versailles on my nephew's business. . . . . . . . .

Farewel, dear Madam! Depend upon my sincerest friendship.

*Paris, Sept.* 25, 17—.

---

## LETTER LXXXVII.

*The* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL *to* MADAME DE VOLANGES.

MY dear and worthy friend, I write this in bed. The most disagreeable accident, and the most impossible to be foreseen, has, by the violent shock and chagrin it has occasioned, given me a fit of illness; not that I have any thing to reproach myself with: but it is always painful to a virtuous woman, who would preserve the modesty of her sex, to have the eyes of the public fixed on her, and I would give the world to

have avoided this unhappy adventure. I do not yet know but I shall go to the country until it is blown over. The matter is thus:

I met at the Marechale de——'s a Mr. Prevan, who you certainly know by name, and was no otherwise known to me; meeting him accidentally at her house, I thought myself safe in looking upon him as good company; his person is tolerable, and he is not deficient in wit; chance, and being tired at play, left me the only woman in company with him and the bishop of ——. Whilst all the others were engaged at lansquenet, we chatted together until supper. At table a new piece was mentioned, which gave him an opportunity of offering his box to the Marechale, who accepted of it; it was agreed I should attend her: this appointment was for Monday last at the French Comedy. As the Marechale

was to sup with me after the performance, I proposed to this gentleman to accompany her; he accordingly came. Two days after he paid me a visit, which passed in the usual conversation; not a single word of any thing remarkable; the day following he again visited me in the morning, which, as it was something extraordinary, I thought it was better, instead of making him sensible, by my manner of receiving him, to politely inform him we were not yet on so intimate a footing as he seemed to think; for this reason I sent him that same day a ceremonious invitation to a supper which I gave the day before yesterday. I did not speak four words to him during the whole evening, and he retired as soon as his party was finished. So far you will agree, nothing had the air of an intrigue. After play was over, we made a mace-

doine, which lasted till two o'clock, and then I went to bed.

My women were gone a full half-hour, when I heard a noise in my apartment. I drew my curtain in a great fright, and saw a man coming in from my closet-door. I shrieked out, and recognised, by my watch light, this Mr. Prevan, who, with a most inconceivable effrontery, bid me not be alarmed, that he would clear up the mystery of his conduct, and requested me not to make any noise. Thus saying, he lighted a bougie. I was frightened to such a degree, that I could not speak a word; his easy and tranquil air petrified me still more: but he had not spoke two words, before I perceived what this pretended mystery was, and my only answer, as you may well believe, was to ring my bell.

By good fortune, my servants, who

had been making merry with one of my women, were not gone to bed. My waiting woman, when near my room, heard me speaking very loud, was frightened, and called all my people. Judge you what a scandal! They were enraged; I thought my valet-de-chambre would have killed Prevan. I must own, at that time I was very glad to have such a powerful assistance: but on reflection, I would rather my waiting woman alone had come; she would have been sufficient, and I should, perhaps, have avoided all this noise which afflicts me. . . . . . . . . .

The tumult awoke all the neighbours; the people talked, and since yesterday the news has spread all over Paris. Monsieur de Prevan is a prisoner, by order of the commandant of his corps, who had the politeness to call on me to make an apology.

This imprisonment will augment the noise, but I have not been able to prevent it. The court and city have been at my gate, which is shut to every body. The few persons I have admitted have assured me, every one does me justice, and the public resentment is very high against Monsieur de Prevan; he certainly deserves it: but that does not wipe away this disagreeable occurrence.

Moreover, this man has certainly some friends, and who knows what such friends may invent to my prejudice? Good God! how unhappy a young woman is! When she has even sheltered herself against slander, it is not sufficient, she must also silence calumny.

I beg you will let me know what you would have done, and what you would do in my situation, with your opinion. It has always been from you

I received the gentlest and most prudent consolations: it is still from you I wish to receive them. Adieu, my dear, good friend! You know the sentiments that attach me to you for ever. I embrace your amiable daughter, and am, &c.

*Paris, Dec. 26, 17—.*

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

HARDING AND WRIGHT,
PRINTERS,
St. John's Square, London.

Bought from
French Friend.
for £1.2.




TAYLOR INSTITUTION
DOMI MINA
NUS TIO
ILLU MEA

